The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN ▪ A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE ▪ VOLUME 13.16

I don't know if I'm going to make it out here but I'm trying hard because I already lost my brother and I'm not trying to lose myself to the streets. Growing up to be big is a real big thing and that's where I'm headed.

read the rest of Baby Whoday's POW on page 6

Of all the weeks not to have the writings from the Land Of Enchantment, featured in this super 13.16 issue, this week we were away on an amazing three day trip to New Mexico. (FYI, The reason behind not having writing from New Mexico in this issue is due to the fact that their juvenile hall is under construction). Stay tune next week to writings featuring New Mexico from the sessions we were proudly present for. Before we go into telling you about our three day journey from San Francisco to New Mexico, we want to dedicate this issue to Steve Serna, our fabulous colleague in New Mexico and the young people we met and embraced who blew our minds with their writing and energetic participation! Props to Reggie, The Bay Gurl, Julian, Anthony, Shenee, Jonathan, Shay, Baby Bashful, Fidel, Lil' Toes and Tyler! Like we said, you won't see their work in this issue, but stay tune for issue 13.17!

Ok, here's the lowdown, last week a Beat editor and our colleague Patricia Johnson embarked on an amazing trip to the "Land of Enchantment" aka New Mexico. We flew into Albuquerque where we met Steve at the airport terminal. For your information, Steve has now been running Beat workshops in the Bernalillo County Juvenile Center for one year!

Steve has been working with young people as a Youth Program Officer 1 for close to a decade. Once a line-staff, his primary job now is "Transporting" young people to court, to placement, to visits etc. In between these tasks, he takes off the "system hat", ad puts on The Beat hat as a Beat facilitator where he conducts weekly workshops with the young people who volunteer to attend.

So are you wondering how the Beat works in Bernalillo County Juvenile Detention And Youth Services Center. Each week Steve puts up a sign-up sheet in all the units, and the young people sign up attend the 2-hour Beat writing workshop session. Every couple of months Steve makes the rounds in each units with Beats in hand and explains his (our) program to the current crop of young people.

OK, upon our arrival in the juvenile, our first stop was watching The Beat workshop in action, and we must say, Steve does an awesome job in maintaining respect and thoughtful contributions from the young contributors while sharing insight with Beat topics to the writers. In the session we were a part of, every young person wrote at least a couple pieces, and in the end, they even read their work. Quite impressive! So impressive that we invited the readers to read their pieces at the assembly, on the following day.

The assembly was arranged by Steve. The whole institution would come together in the gym, as we discussed The Beat Within. The ultimate highlight was when the young people stepped up and read their priceless work. Courageous and powerful!

After the morning event, we traveled with Steve up to San Juan County, to a town called Farmington, which is three hours outside of Albuquerque. We met the very impressive and charming director, Traci Neff of the San Juan County Juvenile Services. We then met the young men housed in YDDC (Youth Diagnostic and Development Center). Some may say that this is the last step for young men, who run out of juvenile resources. They can stay in the YDDC until they're 21 years of age. In Farmington, the young people who are sentenced to the YDDC, after a YDDC evaluation, return to their community/juvenile hall. The jv is sectioned off for these young men to do their time. We ran a program with ten young men in the YDDC. It was very inspiring. The art and the poetry they shared with us are breath-taking. Each young man works on a portfolio during his time refining his skills as an artist, writer, poet and includes such work in his portfolio, plus various mementos – photos, certificates etc.

One correctional officer told us upon leaving the site, that this is the happiest and most excited these young men have been in awhile and that they look forward to the Beat to include their gems in our issues.

It doesn't stop here either, we went over to the RTC (residential Treatment Center), which is co-ed and we did a program with their young people and they too were so moved/excited by The Beat Within, that after our presentation, every writer went back to his/her room and return with their writing and art to share with us. In the end, we drove away feeling great about our work, and thrilled by the reception given to us by Traci and her colleagues. Thank you Traci!!

On our last day in Albuquerque, we met with the out of custody boys, who are ordered by the court to go to on-site school from home, while they are waiting to return to a school outside of the juvenile service center site. Our program, won the young men and staff over, and we were informed that Steve would begin weekly workshops with this group every Friday morning, with the goal of including the girls.

Before we departed, we had the great opportunity to meet the very cool Director, Tom Swisstack, who also happens to be the Mayor of Rio Rancho, New Mexico. Talk about responsibility! Anyhow, it was an honor to hear from Tom who gets it, when it comes to finding innovative ways to help the youth who come to their facility. Thanks Tom!

Last but not least it was an honor to meet Judge Monica Zamora, Judge John J. Romero and Judge Bill Parnall. How often do you get to sit down and talk with three judges about The Beat Within and to listen to their important work in the community. Thank you Judges for believing in The Beat Within, we know your work is not easy, but we are glad you are the ones listening to our young people.

Yes indeed, New Mexico was yet another highlight for this amazing program. Don't be surprised to see Steve Serna out here in California one day soon! Until then, this amazing colleague and friend with the support of his community will continue to touch lives, by providing an ear, pencils and paper to the young people interested in contributing to The Beat Within.

The topics in this issue addressed prior to the writing featured in this wonderful issue are... "What do I owe myself?"

Second topic, "Right to Learn" - Thinking back about your time in school, what could your school have done differently to better educate and support its students? What are the biggest changes that need to happen in public schools to make sure they teach every student? Did you attend your school regularly? Why or why not? Is there anything that would have made you go every day? If there were three things you would change, what would they be? What programs in your school were successful? Should those types of programs be expanded? Why do you think the California Governor is proposing cutting $5 billion from education in the state, and what will those cuts mean? Should students protest these cuts? How?

Third topic, "A positive school experience" - Have had moments where school was the place to be and you didn't want the class/the moment/the interaction/exchange to end, because you were so into it? This week, tell us of a time you had one of those great experiences in school. Explain what it was all about, with as many details as you can remember — from the subject, the teacher, the program, the project, to your contribution.

Lastly, "Growing Up" - Have you heard of the phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child"? In your opinion, what does this expression mean? Thinking about your own community, neighborhood, etc. who are some people/community members who you think are important in helping a person to grow from child to adult?

Thank you friends for reading the editorial note, we know the bulk of this issue is even better!! OK Steve, minus the great writers in New Mexico, this issue is for you! Thank you for making Bernalillo County New Mexico the mother-ship for The Beat Within in New Mexico! Bring on Farmington! And next stop, the juvenile facility in Las Cruces and expanding our work in the YDDC!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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Making History In '08

In 2008, in the primaries, there was the first in history, a woman candidate, Hillary Clinton, and a Black man named Barak Obama. They both are Democrats. They both have the most publicity, which in the end could bite them in the ass—meaning while the Democrats are eating up the publicity, the Republicans can make a very sly comeback for the election. This election can go three ways. Either Hillary wins by a majority vote, and hopefully makes Obama her running mate.

During her term they could boost our economy up again. Hillary could get the favors that people owe her out of the way, and pull out of the wars. She could get the major issues that need to be dealt with, such as bringing home our young troops, paying our debts off, and getting our economy back to where it was, if not better.

Obama could be doing the long-term planning for Hillary's term. He could be working on minor issues that they each promised America that would make the people happy--for example, legalizing marijuana. If Obama wins, which I believe he will, it will only be for the simple fact that our white government, who are men, would rather see a Black man than a white woman on board with them.

Also, if Obama wins, he would probably get assassinated, which he is knowing and willing to take that chance. Even if he does get assassinated, he has made history and a statement, which people will follow. That statement is that he broke a social norm, being Black and a President. Citizens would be ecstatic, knowing that we, our government, finally has the stick out of their asses.

If Hilary wins, there's one problem that could happen. She's been involved with the White House before, being the first lady and all. It would be the same people back in office again. The only advantage to that is she knows how to get something done and make change happen. People owe her favors. Also, she has connections--with that advantage, someone like Obama, who is new and has a family history of being presidents, he should be President and have Hillary as Vice President.

-Anna, Marin

From The Beat: You've already given this election a lot of thought. Who would you vote for, if you could? Do you believe the US would change radically simply if a woman or a Black man became President? If so, how?

A Little Energy

Dear lil' kid, don't do drugs. In the years to come, people will pressure you: "Hey hit this blunt kid!" "Take a pull of this bottle!" Things like those questions will bring you down in the eyes of society. Not telling you to become a zombie, but to make responsible decisions.

Go to school, don't let you friends influence you to do things that you don't want to. Be a strong person, not that you aren't going to be one, but thirteen is a tender age. You and your parents may argue and you might get kicked out of the house by both your parents, but hold on…OK? The sun will still shine in the morning.

You will always make mistakes, but try to learn from them. You may get away with things but be careful, karma's a bitch. Well, lil man I'm pretty sure I told you enough to get you by for the years to come. Peace.

-P(e)Tree, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, we bet everyone wishes they'd received a letter like this when they were youngsters. Your good advice to your former self really shows that you've been through a lot and learned from it all. You seem to be able to recognize the causes for a lot of your trouble and have ideas about how more trouble could be avoided. Can you some of your own good advice to your benefit now? Sounds to us like this advice can be useful to anyone. v

The Life

It's the life that I choose or better yet the life chose me,
Nobody seems to know they own history
So I put it together, solved it like a mystery
African-Americans in effect, you know I represent
Tryin' to make a dollar out of fifteen cents,
It's hard to survive and still pay rent
Single mothers raising kids on their own,
Babies crying 'cause their father's not coming home

This is the life in the hood
Struggling everyday to survive yo
But hip-hop keeps it alive though

The future might be bleak,
but speak your mind and don't retreat.
Unity in the community is what we seek.
I stand strong, I'm not weak.
Tomorrow is never promised but today is here,
let me kick it to your ear.

I'm gonna make it real clear before this cipher disappears.
Love is power, but people turning to hate is sour.
Watch my creativity devour all pain and turn it into rain.
Wash it all away
because the revolution is today and like Assata Shakur,
I'm here to pave the way.

-Bra Bra, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem with a strong and powerful message. What do you see as your role in the struggle for justice and equality?

I Followed

Well, first let me say I'm a sophomore with less credits than a freshman.
But I was stupid growing up, I thought "screw life and screw everyone in this world."
But I was wrong. I thought by not going to school I was looking more gangsta than ever.
My homeboys tell me "screw it fool, don't be a pan".
Then every day I would just think "screw it, don't want to go to school I'll go tomorrow,"
then tomorrow came. Then I would say "wait til tomorrow" over and over again
until I finally dropped out.
I started fooling around with different girls because, well, my homeboys were doing it.
Well what I'm trying to say is what happens to you in your life is what your friends do.
That's if you are a follower. That's why I say "be a leader."
This might sound stupid, but just finish school.
I still have a chance and because I stopped following my friend I want to go to college.
But for now I'm just going to drain the ranch for all their credits.
So remember these words: A man that doesn't know how to say what he means,
doesn't mean what he says, so listen to what people say to you .
So, until paper meets pencil and love from San Jose, much respect.

-Lucky, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks so much for this, Lucky. Recent studies have been coming out that suggest that our group of friends has the most influence over us and what we do than anything else. As you say, it's important to realize what our friends' influence is making us do and then decide if we are okay and staying true to ourselves. So, you are on your way to graduation and college, what do you want to do with your degree? How will you keep track of your influences during the next stages of your life?

From Here To There

It's hard to get from here to there
If you never get out of bed.
You lie a lot to fool your friends, but you fooled yourself instead.
It's harder to get from here to there,
If you set your goals too high;
Then nothing ever works out right;
Soon, you no longer try.
But the hardest way to get from here to there,
Is when all you do is count up the years, and miles to go.
Then when you look back at life,
you're through before you know.
So how do you get from here to there?
Well, you first must believe you can,
Let no one tell you differently,
It's your life that's in your hands.
Then turn your dreams in goals and see what you need now,
To satisfy your requirements:
The why, the where, and how.
At first you're overwhelmed, of course;
There is so much you don't know.
But keep your faith, be strong, and there is a way to go.
Take careful steps and do them right,
Take pride in each thing done.
Don't look too far ahead of yourself,
Just that next step yet to come.
Before you know it you'll be there friends,
Your dreams will then be real.
And you'll be standing where I am telling others how good it feels.
You'll tell them, not to quit themselves,
To have faith, though it's hard to bear.
So they know it can be done—
they, too, can get from here to there.

-Lucky, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, you've struck a deep note of truth in this poem, all about the challenges of moving from where you are to where you want to be. We especially like the advice to not "look too far ahead of yourself, just that next step yet to come," because if you look at everything you want or need to do all at once you can get overwhelmed and give up altogether. So, it's great that this poem can apply to anyone in any situation, but what did you have in mind when you wrote it? Where is your "here" and "there?"

What Do I Owe Myself

I owe myself a different outlook on life. I owe myself an education that goes past 9th grade. I deserve a life where I can stop running from my probation officer and these punk old police. They always trying to throw the goons to the wolves and look at us in these punk old cages.

I owe myself and my family a high school diploma. I owe myself a better life then I was given.

-Beat Name, San Francisco

From The Beat: No, readers, that's not a mistake. Our writer chose "Beat Name" for his Beat name... But putting that silliness aside, this piece says some very important things. Yes, you do owe yourself these things, and it's in your power to deliver on what you owe. The only way to get the cops to focus elsewhere is to give them no reasons to focus on you, and you can accomplish that by taking your schooling as seriously as you write here. If you do that, you'll find yourself farther and farther from the world of cops and goons, and closer and closer to the world of family, work and freedom.

How Many Of You?

Have any of you been shot or shot at?
Have any of you shot someone or killed someone?
How many family members or fiends have you lost to gun mentality?
Do you think before you pull the trigger?
How many of you grew up with out your parents?
How many of you had to grow up in group homes?
How many of you feel safer in jail than on the outs?
How many of you would rather be free but have to go to a group home to get it?
How many of you are really gonna change your lives when you get out?
Why live your lives in a hard manner
Instead of striving for bigger and better things?
Just ask yourself a question and try to answer it
And if you can't, it ain't the end of the world.
Just try again ...and ask yourself a 1, 2, 3, question.

-Lil' Corey, Alameda

From The Beat: Great poem! We hope that some of The Beat readers and writers try to answer the questions you ask here.

And The Children Will Follow

These days I see little kids like nine, ten, eleven, so on, that are either doing drugs and violence on the streets, or talking about them. And to tell the truth I don't know why they choose to. I don't know if its because they see their older brothers or someone in their families do it, so they think its ok to do, so they bring it to the school thinking they're cool and all that shhh.

To keep it real, if you one of them kind of people that talk or do them kind of things in front of your younger people, you're a bad example because young kids look up to older people they see and absorb everything that's around them. So if they see you doing positive things they going to grow up doing positive things. But if you doing negative things around them, they going to grow up doing the same. So whether you know it or not our youngsters' futures is depending on us older people. It's up to you how safe and healthy you want your younger ones to become.

-Reese, San Francisco

From The Beat: You've put your finger on one of the most important roles anyone with sense can and should play in relation to kids coming up behind them. Yes, children learn by seeing what their older brothers, sisters and cousins are doing. They don't learn by being lectured to or told what to do, but by seeing and following. Their brains are not yet finished developing, so the reality and consequences of what they're doing are not part of their thinking yet. Like you said, if you're doing something you'd be ashamed of your little brother or sister to know about, or something you don't want them to do, then you'd better stop doing it because, for sure, they will follow your lead.

What Do I Owe Myself?

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Mike writing. I'ma write about this topic that caught my attention this week.

What I owe to myself is to live life. I really haven't been living the life I'm supposed to live. I'm not supposed to be dodging bullets and seeing young ninjas dropping. I'm supposed to be in somebody in school getting my edumacation and chasing these females. You know what I'm talking about.

I'm supposed to be seeing my mom in the house, not behind these walls. I'm supposed to be eating dinner with my family, not with some ninjas I don't even know. I'm supposed to be in bed with the wifey, not sleepin' in the room with another ninja. That shhh ain't right.

I can't complain, though, because I'm the one that put myself in this position, not nobody else. I'm not about to continue to throw my life away. I'm about to live the life I want to live, not the life somebody else want me to live. We all we got.

-Bb, San Francisco

From The Beat: When we read something like this Mike, we see clearly that, whoever you "got," you have yourself. You have the intelligence to see clearly where the path you've been walking leads — and the determination not to end up at its inevitable destination. Those are qualities that not everyone is so fortunate to have (much less the gift of a mother who is there at home, waiting for you with that home-cooked dinner you should be eating with family). We can only hope that you remember enough of this bitter experience of allowing strangers to dictate your life to never let it happen again.

Short Story (Continued...)

The whine of the hydraulic door awoke Dylan from his daze. The early morning sunlight poured into the back of the c-130 military transport plane. The wind stung his as he stood up and walked toward the open tail of the plane. The warning light above his head flashed a red signal, the rest of his team stood up in a line. A loud buzzer rung in his head as he lept out of the aircraft. A sudden rush of adrenaline surged through his body and a bone crushing jerk as the parachute opened he could feel his blood pressure spike with each heart beat.

He could see the ground shooting towards him as he plummeted toward earth. He knew that the 70pd, backpack combined with his other supplies would definitely make the landing a living hell. He pulled back on the chute and rocked himself forward just as he hit the ground the grass still wet from the morning due, providing a surprisingly soft landing he pulled the knife strapped to his ankle and freed himself from the tugging grasp of the cotton demon. It floated away almost with a life like elegance towards the horizon. Dylan lay quiet on the path of open land and waited for the sledge hammer in his temple to stop. He pulled the Thompson M1A1 from its pouch on his back and removed the protective plastic just in case of a wet landing. The sleek hard Mahogany wood hugged the frame of the deadly device it was dangerous and beautiful at the same time.

He took a deep breath and sat up. The taunt whistle of an occasional falling bomb soared overhead followed by a deafening explosion the horizon was painted black from the smoldering cities in the distance. Dylan broke into a slight run toward where he thought his team had landed. He trudged through the dense forest flinching at everything that moved he heard a slight cracking sound then thump followed by a stringing in his chest he fell to the floor.

-AnonymousOne, Santa Clara

From The Beat: A very well written short story. It is written so good that it sounds like a page ripped out of a New York Time's Best seller. You should consider writing your own book.

Laugh Now, Cry Later

I'm laughing now, but later I'll be crying
I'm living having fun, while later I'll be dying
I'm doing me, but I know later I'ma regret it
I'm saying forget, but I know it's gone come back from the feelings I neglected
Do you feel what I'm saying? Come, you're doing the same
Laugh now, cry later; it's just a part of the game
I'm maskin' the laughing but the crying is so real
Even if I'm tryna hide what I feel from BS I have to deal
Laugh now, but don't cry when you end up in a cell
I never shed a tear in here 'cause I'm a firme female
I been here and there and then back to hell
I've seen shhh that not one soul I'll tell
This is burning like a shot of Hennessey
I'm laughing at these ninjas for what they claim to be
And I'm crying 'cause I see change in my society
My eyes must by lying to me
Damn! This are supposed to be my fam
They ain't realizing they gone be crying like I am
Laughing clowns all around, blasting sounds so loud
And then a crying clown goes down
I'm laughing now but later I'll be crying
I'm living life having fun while later I'll be crying

-Giggles, San Francisco

From The Beat: You are young enough to change your ways/To flip the script, no more delays/To benefit from knowledge you've gained/From too many tears and too much pain/To stop clowning and face what's real/It's time for you to close the deal

Never Alone

Throughout the world you got to slow for the cone zone
Because on earth you are never alone!
You gotta stay focused and never stay stuck
A person
Is never somebody, nobody, anybody but onebody
Look back! You think you got some buddy
You feel
Like you the one and only to be what been through?
Talk to other people and they also have been screwed
Life is like a connect phone
Listen on the other line and you are never alone!

-Lil' Payasa, San Francisco

From The Beat: Suck simple words with such deep meanings. It puts us in mind of what the British poet, John Donne, wrote four centuries ago: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind..." (Of course, in this century, we would add "womankind"...)

Family

Some say that family is the most important thing on earth. But if you had to be in my family you would be thinking otherwise. Growing up looking at my family I noticed that more than half of the males did time in jail or were doing time in jail.

I remember in the second grade a told my teacher that I thought I was going to jail because that's what I seen all the men in my family do. Look at me now I guess I lived up to that expectation because I am in jail right now. Don't get me wrong I don't like coming here and I hate that I did what everybody said I would just because of the older boys in my family went to jail.

I think that if the men in my family all went to college I would be on my way to college instead of sleeping in a cell. I want to change my life because I don't want to see my younger cousin coming to jail like all the men in his family. To all the people who have younger siblings you may not think that what you do doesn't affect them cause it does.

I remember when my sister got arrested at school, and I seen the police come to my school and dragged me out in handcuffs and I was sitting in the back of the police thinking back to when I was eight and I seen my sister got dragged out in handcuffs.

-Jeremiah, Alameda

From The Beat: Powerful writing. You're right about watching the members of your family go to jail and then you continue the trend. But just because you're in jail right now, doesn't mean that you have to keep coming to jail or be in jail for the rest of your life.

Growing Up To Be Big

My name is Baby Whoday well that's what they call me. I'm growing up to be big, it's hard out here on these Oakland streets. I'm trying to make it to be big, but it's hard because people are shot every minute. I'm from Oakland and every time I walk out the door I hear gunshots, people are dying. I've been shot at twice by people who don't like me.

I don't know if I'm going to make it out here but I'm trying hard because I already lost my brother and I'm not trying to lose myself to the streets. Growing up to be big is a real big thing and that's where I'm headed.

-Baby Whoday, Alameda

From The Beat: The honesty is brutal. Thank you. Sounds like your environment is really scary and dangerous to be in. What do you think you need to do to get out of it? Can you live in the same place and remove yourself from the situation? Do you think you need to live somewhere else in order to get past it?

Life's Good

Wha's up Beat? It's Bakgwai again. Happy to be alive; ya know, life's good, 'cause I got more chances once I get out of here. It don't end here no matter how long it takes me to get out.

The DA pushing four years right now and my public defender says that they got likely chance from all the evidence against me. But no matter what the outcome, I know life's good. It's worth living for, and it's worth waiting for. I used this time to better myself mentally, physically, and emotionally, taking every opportunity to learn from these experiences.

Four years seemed like forever when I heard it, but over the months I came to realize more and more how that's less than 5% of my lifespan (hopefully). Many of these people facing life sentences, 100-year sentences... It doesn't even sound realistic.

Like I said, for the majority of us, life's good, and we don't get to trip off of a couple months or a couple years. Just use these small segments of our lives to make the future look reassuring and to regain control of what got out of hand.

Thanks.

-Bakgwai, San Francisco

From The Beat: No, thank, YOU, Bakgwai, for consistently writing something both serious and enlightening. You're right that four years, which is a long time, is short when you look at the long path that lies ahead. Of course, like you, we wish that you didn't have to spend any more of your time under someone else's control, but knowing that you do, we have great faith in your ability to make the best out of a bad situation — to learn as much as you can, to meet new experiences with an open mind, to remain upbeat and optimistic, and to prepare for a decent life in freedom.

Ask, Learn, Read, Listen

Throughout my life, I have always had my mind so expanded, not in a nosy way, but in the way to be knowledged and aware of my surroundings, from politically to the street, to self knowing myself. Being educated is a powerful thing. Knowing and being open-minded and also having a broadened mind will get you places. You be able to engage yourself into conversations where professionals attend and because of your knowledge, you're able to set your mind in many levels.

You'll just be that better person. Understanding yourself and really finding yourself will get you through things because you'll know yourself and be able to control whatever it is you need to control. You'll be able to stop something, do something, etc.

Knowledge... know yourself, what's around you, the world, universe we live in, the screwed up society we're in, etc.

Ask questions! It's worth it. Read books, good ones; listen for once in class, you'll learn something; use them many resources we got out here, put 'em to use, that's why there out there. Browse the net, you'll get a lot out of it. If you truly don't know something, a question can't ever be stupid!

-Get Guap, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love this piece filled with such good advice that it leaves little to respond to. There is so much to learn in the world that a lifetime is not enough, so we applaud your efforts to learn as much as you can — about yourself and the world. The expression, "Know thyself" is very ancient advice given at the Oracle at Delphi in Ancient Greece (more than 3,000 years ago!). About 700 years after that, the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius wrote (150 years after Jesus lived): "Look well into thyself; there is a source of strength which will always spring up if thou wilt always look there."

My Tribulations

As soon as people see me they judge me by the way I look, the way I carry myself, the way I talk, he's just a bald-headed crook. They call my good-for-nothing, but screw it, they love it when it gets to me, I can't seem to change my ways sometimes I wonder if it's meant to be, is it destiny that I'm in a cell counting bricks everyday temper hotter than hell, watching days go by, my life slipping through my fingers and it's difficult to catch it just like trying to swim up river. And if swimming's not your thing it's more than likely you'll drown and that's how I feel, always, completely lost and never found.

People judge me 'cause I'm brown they'll never know the devil owns me, they just see all the tattoos don't even try to get to know me, never tried to show me how my life could have been different. Never even tried to talk to me or let me talk and listened, think for sure I'll be in prison, by the time I turn eighteen, already got a strike and I'm not even seventeen.

I got two years to change my life and get back in the right direction, they say that no one's perfect, but I'm aiming for perfection and given my situation, let's just say that it's a mission.

-Rascal, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks for this honest and real insight into your life. It's true that people stereotype and treat people differently based on how they look, we're so sorry that it seems to have affected you so much throughout your life. There are a lot of misconceptions about teenagers, especially teens who get locked up and you have to deal with that prejudice from society daily. You say "they love it when it gets to me," does it get to you? How do you move past what others think and just believe in who you actually are?

Thinking

Damn!!!
Thinking 'bout my moms
Thinking 'bout if my pops is thinking bout me
Thinking 'bout Lil Teddy, free that man
Thinking 'bout if I should handle his funk
Thinking 'bout when I get out what am I going to do with myself
Thinking 'bout my haters
Thinking 'bout when I'ma see God or the Devil
Thinking 'bout all the enemies that's been knock down... hello...
Thinking 'bout why I'm thinking so much
Thinking 'bout the money that's stacked
Thinking 'bout who is gonna read this
Thinking 'bout who is gonna dismiss this
Thinking 'bout who speaking
Damn we miss you Teddy,
Thinking 'bout what Judge K thinking bout me
Thinking 'bout all the females I snatched
Thinking 'bout what God want from me
Thinking if he turn his back on me and just going to let me be man Free Lil' Teddy
Thinking 'bout why my life is so corrupted
Thinking 'bout why my past is so destructive
Thinking to put the game of chess as my life
Thinking 'bout hittin' that lick
Or busting that character or even lettin' 'em go... na, can't do that...
Thinking if God died for our sins why do we still sin?
My brain hurts from all this thinking
Free Lil' Two-One and Lil' Teddy the streets is missing us
It's not even me thinking it's the devil speaking out of them walls Thinkin' bout how much blood has been shed
Thinking' bout how many people want revenge
Thinkin' 'bout who died today
I can't think about nothing 'cause in reality you're doing the Thinking and you're a dead man that going to be put in that box or In that cell ...if you ask the statistics

-Lil' Two-One, Alameda

From The Beat: Thinkin' 'bout how many of our most talented young people waste their lives in jail/Thinkin' 'bout how you have potential to succeed instead of fail/Thinkin' 'bout how much life you deserve/Thinkin' 'bout how the road ahead has a few curves/Thinkin' about how you could do whatever you want.

Survival

How you doing Beat? Me, good. I'ma be getting outta here soon Hopefully this is my last time writing y'all!

Well Beat, tonight I'ma be writing about my own topic. It's Survive. So when I was in the outs, I went through hell. I did the most outrageous things to survive. The one thing I didn't do was sell my body, or at least not for money.

See, it all started when I ran away from my last foster home in May '07. I ran straight to my mama, and once I got there, I saw exactly why I've been in foster care all my life. She would disappear for days, leaving me to take care of my little three-year-old sister. It's a good thing it was summer break.

But yeah, anywho, I was livin' with her for about two months. Then we got kicked out, so we moved in with her crack-head friend. We were there for about a week, all nice and happy. My mom wasn't smoking for a whole week. I was so proud of her, but that all changed. She left me a the house with my little sister and her daddy. After my mom didn't show up for a day, he left. So then I was stuck there with my little sister by ourselves. We were there for four days by ourselves, with no phone calls from our mom.

On the morning of the fifth day, my big sister called my phone telling me to pack as much as I can and be ready to go. When she gets there, to fast forward, we ended up moving with my sister. She enrolled me in school and took me and my little sister in, but unfortunately for us my mama came back in the picture. Her and my sister flipped on me and called me all kinds of gay-bashing names, so I left.

I went to a man's house who knew my mama. He let me stay with him for a few weeks, but not for free. Eventually I left, and fortunately for me I ran into my cousin Marcy. She has her own spot. She said I could stay with her but not for free, (nothing sexually though). I did some kind of work to stay there.

So while I was stayin' there, I met a man. He promises me the world, you know, spittin' game, and my stupid self fell for it. But he said we would be like bruh and sis, so I leave my cousin house and go with him. Once we get there, he says I have to let him do something if I'ma stay at his house. So I had to let him do that.

Make a long story short, that happened on several different times with several different people, but that was keeping a roof over my head for that twenty-four hours. And that's my survival story. But there are plenty more and that's not even half of them.

-Titi, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can't tell you how sad your stories of survival make us. We cannot judge you for how you've learned to survive, because we don't have to face such circumstances, and no one — and certainly no child — should ever have to. You know, Titi, that both your mom and your little sister's father are guilty of crimes for which they could end up in jail. It's called child abandonment, and it is, in our minds, one of the worst crimes there is because it is an absolute betrayal of the most fundamental duty of a parent, and that is to care for their children. (And "the price" you paid for staying at both those men's houses also makes them guilty of crimes, but that's another story...) If you turn your mother in, you're still left alone again to survive how you can, so that is no solution at all. You have to find a way, when you get out of here, to take small steps toward becoming self-sufficient by working legit jobs (and believing no promises from men) so that you can continue to mature into the responsible young woman that your mother has never been able to be. We are so, so sorry that you have been dealt such a raw hand. Yet, we see in your writing both a brain and a heart, and qualities of human decency that we hope you can use to take you to a different place.

My mom wasn't smoking for a whole week. I was so proud of her, but that all changed.

Dedicated to Mrs. Lee

Well I think that the phrase "it takes a village to raise a child" means that if you live in a good and healthy community you can go and grow up to be a successful man/woman.

Well there was this one person when I was 15 who helped me stay outta trouble. I went to a place called "Lincoln Recreational Center". I guess that's were all the gangbangers and drug dealers go kick it at and it was one person who worked there that talked to all the gangbangers and drug dealers and help them outta trouble

That one person name is Ms. Lee. She helped me stay outta trouble by talking to me and every one around me, even though a lot of gangsters go posted there it was a safe envirorment for kids. Ms. Lee was an ordinary person who talked to us about life and everything we needed to know about the world she gave us things to do so we can keep away from violence and all the bad things around us.

When things (bad things) started happening you could always count on her to talk to and she would listen and try to help you out. Everyone who kick it there, in their eyes she was like a grandmother to us and that kept us going because we knew we had a person to talk to when we are down and have a decision problem and she was always there to listen.

But gang violence broke out and a lot of people left, even me, but no matter how violent it is, it still a safe place to go and spend your time 'cause Ms. Lee tries to keep it safe. So I'm writing this to dedicate the article to Ms. Lee for helping me with my problems and keep everything safe.

Ms. Lee will always be like a grandmother to me.

-Thanh, ALameda

From The Beat: Ms. Lee sounds like an incredible person. When you get out, will you go find her again and let her know how much she meant to you? Did she have people to help her keep the rec center going?

She Left Me

Once again I sit here all alone
Just to open my eyes and see the steel and stone
Out my cell window I see rain from the sky
Just to realize it was a tear from my eye
I feel the cold chill me down to the bone
I'm forced to stay here but this cell is not my home
I hear the ring the metal swinging of keys and metal locks
The scrape of boots upon concrete as guards patrol the catwalks Another day as a juvenile prisoner doing time
I got nothing to lose but my sleep
A gangsta dreaming of love creeps down to my feet
A thug in love only has one destination
To reminisce on a kiss could only be my imagination
My girl swore she would wait and never be late
But Sancho came along and she left me from my gate
Please accept my calls
The blessing from your voice can penetrate these walls
With a piece of paper and envelope infatuated with ink
The wall and locks got you wondering what a gangsta like me can think.
It's all a struggle for what
You don't see
Like the song says somebody please
But I had a choice and I chose wrong
And I got to go on because I gotta be strong.

-Niko, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a great poem! You have a lot of skill and talent. We really encourage you to keep writing Niko! You have to be strong and one day you'll find the one that you've been dreaming off all along.

Dearest Beat

I hope you receive my letter in the best of health. Well, I'm not feelin' any of the topics today so I am gonna pump some knowledge in the fellow Beaters' minds

I have been in here since December and I've spent my B-day, Christmas, New Years and my mama's birthday and father's in here. And let me just say now that it doesn't feel good knowing that you're somewhere that you're not supposed to be on that certain day.

I've really thought about my situation and come to the realization that I honestly need to change my life for the better and I have started since I've been here. I'm eighteen now and this will be my last time in juvenile hall.

On 3/6/08 I received my GED while incarcerated which was two days ago and I still have six more months to go until the day of my release. But all in all I believe that change is possible for me as well as others. But it can only happen if the one who seeks change is dedicated to it!

To all Beaters this isn't a lecture nor a story from bad to good, but simply knowledge.

-Tanielnu, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks for taking the time to educate us all. When those big events or milestones come up and we're not living the life we thought we would it can hit us pretty hard. Sounds like you're making changes though and that's fantastic. What's the next big event in your life? Where do you want to be when it comes? If you keep up your good work you can count on being there when the time comes.

My Rights

They tell us that we got the right to learn,
how come we don't have the right to kick back and burn,
to chill and watch while the world does its turns?
Screw it, I'll spit on some issues that this paper concerns:
Cut money from school and worsen the education
give less to kids and soon you'll create a lesser nation,
they'll have less knowledge to face life's trials and tribulations,
you'll water down their wisdom
like adding some precipitation
instead of college, you're setting them up for incarceration.
While everyone's having hesitation on what to do for school kids,
high schoolers snap and start splitting peoples wigs
or they become a sniper and bust shots off of a tower.
Government says they in control,
but who really got the power?
There's only one thing man can't conquer, and that's time.
Everything come to an end one day, even this rhyme.
A lot of committed crimes, it was just part of growing up,
busting shots at rivals for the signs they was throwin' up.
It doesn't take a village, it only take a block
That's where we learn basic instincts like holding a glock.
Now, I ain't Tupac but this world needs to change,
cause the first thing people say isn't hello,
it's: "What you bang?"
Life is hard, that's why we grow up into a gang.
I can't hate cause I do the same, so do your thang.
Only advice I'll give you is don't get caught slipping,
keep your goal in sight so you can accomplish your mission.

-T-bone, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You are right that cutting money from education will only create more problems in the long run for society. But we think you excuse gang life a little too easily. A brilliant writer like you needs to be as hard on your peers as you are on the system.

Don't Like Being Judged

My name is Sol, and I am a young teen soon to be fifteen in June.

I don't think it's right how people who are grown like to judge me when I say that my boyfriend is eighteen. They always assume the negative. I want to share my experiences with my boyfriend who I have been with for foour months going on five.

Being with him has changed my life. Before I got with him I was always depressed and sad. When I got with him I became really happy. I always have a smile on my face. When we first met, we talked on the phone all day and night. When we weren't talking we were texting.

After the first month I got real depressed with everything that was happening. I felt like I had nobody I could talk to. It seemed as if he was the only person who knew what was wrong. He told me to come and see him in Livermore.

I was in Richmond waiting for the BART, thinking about how I couldn't believe that only after one month this boy knew me better then anybody. On my way there I was so happy and nervous. It was New Year's Day. He picked me up at the Dublin BART Station. We got on the bus. I was so happy 'cause all he did was hug me and kiss me and told me how happy he was to see me. It's been a long time since I saw someone so happy to see me.

When we got to his house we ate pizza then went upstairs to his room. We lay down and watched TV. It was the first time I was really happy in over a year. I got sad because I never wanted him to leave me. We had an amazing time together that night. I've never experienced an experience so loving. He made me feel comfortable and safe! I've never been like that with anyone.

After that night he's stuck by my side through whatever! He has kept me happy which is important to me. I love him and I know he loves me too...

-Sol, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a romantic and beautiful story, Sol. Thanks for sharing it with us. The question we are left with is, how does this positive influence in your life connect with the fact that you are currently writing this from jail? How does he feel about the fact that you are locked up? Is he encouraging you to stay out of trouble?

Poetry From The Heart

If you don't take me for me you just hatin' on me
And why when I'm just like you,
A teenage youth that don't what else to do.
Believe me or not I've been there and done that,
Even dumb shhh like tried the drugs called crack
Two-thousand-six, the year I turned to the streets.
Two-thousand seven, the year I got beat.
In and out of jail, that's where you would find me.
Led to the left, trying to find the right,
Damn is this my game plan for this thing called life.
Now look at me, a teenage youth that wants to change. Only thing stopping me is the funked up game
I want to change, get back to the old me
Well, that's in my mind and not brought to reality.
It's hard when you feel like you're all alone,
No one to help you, you're in this alone.
Damn I miss being the youth that didn't play this game
Now that it's my turn, it knows my name.
Don't be like me or no one else.
Do the right move and keep it lit
'Cause in the game you're sure to get hit
These are the words comin' from the heart.
Let it sink through to you or you'll end up like me—
A teenage youth that wants to be set free.

-Erica, Alameda

From The Beat: This is such a powerful piece. It's hard to get out of the game, but it's not impossible. Use your skills and intelligence to help steer you on a positive path!

Writers' Note:

OK this a lil poem I wrote. Think deep and hard as you read it. As you reminisce on the sacrifices you've made, whether for yourself or for that hood, you will realize this poem is real.
Sacrifice
This from a solid homie!
Sacrifice is an action that is not always good.
Some people sacrifice for their family. Some sacrifice for their hood.
Sacrificing could get you locked up, or sacrificing could get you pass this.
Sacrificing could get you money. But also sacrificing could get you blasted.
We all no sacrificing can be done in many different ways.
Most people sacrifice to get through with their day.
People choose to sacrifice by carrying that thang.
Just like sacrificing is a rule of joining a gang.
All the sacrifices I ever made were for negative thing.
To be honest till tonight I never knew what sacrifice really means.
I think if I make better choices I won't end up in jail every time.
Maybe if I make the proper sacrifices
I can get all the stress off my mother's mind.
Really I should hit the books and focus on my education.
Next thing I know my mom will be first seat front row at my graduation.
But what about my gang nation?
I always sacrificed to be known to never let a rival pass.
We sacrifice all our lives homie. But how long is this war going to last?.
For the drugs I need to study to get another job so I don't have to sell it.
But I have the option whether to inhale it.
Maybe I can switch up my friends so I don't have to even smell it.
I stay putting in my work.
Sometimes when I get an invitation to do some dirt.
I need to tell myself time I'ma pass.
I need to spend time with my mother 'cause I don't know how long her life's gonna last.
I need to make sacrifices to change my mind from negative to positive.
I need to focus on exercising instead of donuts and yadida
I'ma make sacrifices to help me do good.
Then when I get successful I could help every one else in the hood.
I do what I do 'cause I believe people in bringing people up.
That's why I let my homies who have nowhere to go stay at my hut.
'Cause I'm scared to find out on the news the next day the homie got shot up.
For the homies wit a kid on the way
Maybe if all goes right, I can buy their son or daughter somethin' new to play.
Listen to what I have to say.
I can be the man to help
Instead of being the man handing you the gun to throw your life away.

-Lil' Mousie, Alameda

From The Beat: This poem cuts right to the heart of the terrible sacrifices that too many young people make over quote unquote loyalty... when like you say, true loyalty is when you watch out for your homies – not doing dirt with them, but helping them try to lift themselves out of the dirt. We hope you hold these words true to your own heart as you make your decisions.

Gangsta Girl No More

Look into my eyes and tell me what you see:
only if you knew the true colors in me
you would know I tell it like it is
and that I'm a gangsta trying to survive,
but you know what they they say,
gangstas ride or die.
Only if you knew what this gangsta chick is like:
ain't no joke or no lie,
this is real talk.
I'ma gangsta always down to ride.
This is like a card game,
you don't know what to expect
but once you get that number
you know what to represent.
I'ma gangsta chick, trying to change my life
but only if I could make that step forward and leave the past behind.
It kinda hard because people know what you're about and what you claim,
being a gangsta chick is all about respect,
but once you cross the line, best believe I'ma disrespect.
But only if you know, I'ma take that step forward
and change my life
because I'ma do it for me not the gang life.

-Lil' Ezzy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem that really gets at that inner struggle of how you identify but that you really are thinking of change and moving forward. Thanks for your attention to this topic and keep writing!

Looking Up To My Brother

Growing up in a hood full of gang bangers, drugs, violence, all I had to look up to was my big brother Freddy.

I always tried to follow him everywhere he went. He was like a hero to me, I idolized him and wanted to be just like him. When I was a very young teen he went to jail and I cried the whole night. The day he came back was unexpected, like death. He told me "jail is a bad place, do your best to stay out of it."

Now I'm 15 and my brother's in jail again. I found out early one morning when I heard the news. After that I went downhill and I started not to care. Now both me and my brother are locked in a cell. The world is a messed up place...and people like us make what it is.

-Juan, Alameda

From The Beat: No Juan – it's not people like you. You were born into a world that was already messed up, and so was your brother. The problem is he didn't know how to deal with it, so he wasn't in a position to teach you how. You need to find other role models – a teacher, a coach, someone positive, to show you a way. Do you have any?

Growing Up!

Well I think "It takes a village to raise a child" means that everyone around you will affect how you grow up. That is why I am always mad. I am mad because when I was 8 years old I, got brutally beat up and raped!

So for all of these years, I've been mad! That has affected my life in many ways. But I think if I lived in a better 'hood that would of never happened!

-Norbit, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear this. We understand how you might feel after what happened. We recommend you to look for professional help if you are still being affected by this horrible event. This is something anyone wouldn't like to experience. You need to find a way to ignore what happened, and start living a new life. You are very young, and have a whole life to live. Life is beautiful, and it has many beautiful things waiting for you to be enjoyed. Give yourself a chance to be happy. We're pulling for you!

Memories

As the tears fall from eyes like rain from the sky
The anger and hurt in my eyes arise
Too many fallen casualties, they gone but not forgotten
March 25, two year anniversary since we seen you on the block and see you Henny bottle poppin'
Got love for the homies who got love for me
To release my pain I crack open a 40
All I see is my carnals end up in a grave
Standin' on the corner reppin' and bangin' our gang
Momma prays every night for me to live long
Papa in the pen for 10 ... Me and mi tio coming out soon, homes
Don't need no pill to thizz, it only makes matters worse
Seen my ex commit suicide an' laid in a hearse
Since I was young had temper like rattlesnakes and pissed off vipers
I'm psycho hyper and smelly like a loaded diaper
Haters hatin' and rats get whacked over conversation
I'll do my time and I'm not trippin' off incarceration
As I sit in my room and I drift on some old memories
I wonder jut like Pac... Is there a heaven for gee

-G Shadow, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't know if there's a heaven or hell/So that's why we think Earth's the place to do well/The "causes" men rep lead to all kinds of wars/Turning mothers to tears and boys into whores/You're smarter than that (you're smarter than most)/But what do "smarts" count if in hell you will roast?/Those haters that's hatin', those rats that get whacked/Don't make your life smelly, it's you that does that/You have gifts you could use to move you beyond/Your circumscribed world, a frog in a pond/We wish we could shake you into seeing your life/As something worth keeping, despite all the strife/But we cannot change you, it's all up to you/But at least we can give you these few words to chew

It may not seem like it or look like it, but I gave up a lot of negative stuff just so I can say I did something good with my life, and not just let it go to waste.

My Sacrifice

I have a sacrifice. I need to sacrifice giving up some things in my life. My worse thing I want to give up is running away from home.

I run away to go to a house party smoke weed drank go to a function hit licks stay out all night. It's not doing anything for me – it's keeping me from going to school, going to church, and hanging out with my family 'cause I am with my patnas getting loaded.

What I need to do is give all that up and go back home, go to school, go get a job, do some thing for myself. Because me being out there at a young age ain't good. I am only fourteen years old doing stupid stuff.

I need to take my butt back to school to school, get an education , and do something productive, 'cause I don't want to end up like my mother prostituting. My sister do the same thing, and that could easily happen to me.

If I stay out there too long, I could run into the wrong people and get invovled in some very bad situations that I probably can't get myself out of.

So my suggestion for myself is to go back home and do the right thing before it's too late. That's my sacrifice. The end.

-Sacrificing, Alameda

From The Beat: And if you do make this so-called sacrifice, your life will be so much better than if you don't. In a way, it's not a sacrifice at all, it's just a chance to make things shape up the way you deserve!

I Like School

I like school, 'cause we got females, not just girls. But my teachers are cool and they're not just teachers, they're friends and sometimes more. If I could change something I would help put a gym and have better PE and do more outside than in the class.

Talkin' about what we could do growing up, no I don't know, but me and my brothers are each others village and do stuff for each other also.

But for all that I do need to make a change in life sometime this year, 'cause stuff ain't right around Oakland CA. And hopefully more black kids will go to school and get more jobs around, 'cause we got all this hustling and ain't gettin' nobody I know going nowhere in '08. But then if we got more police we would have more kids pay more attention to doing good things.

What good things would I do? I would go to school, come home, help my mom's errands around the house, and help my little brother read and more stay out of trouble. I don't bang or hustle and I like to do things to know that I'm alive for the next day. And I know I can walk around the next day without looking back to see who's following me, and I ain't gotta worried about where I rest my head.

-Marquill, Alameda

From The Beat: You're talking about a life of peace, a life where you can be proud of yourself, and raise a family. This is something you deserve, this is something that our whole community deserves. But change starts with the individual, right? So how are you going to change?

I Owe Myself A Better Lifestyle

I think I owe myself a better life style because even though I gang bang I know it is not the life to live if you want to make something of life and go somewhere.

Last night a counselor hooked me up with a book that gave me a good description of the place I would end up if I continued living this life. It's called "23 Minutes in Hell" and the way the guy who wrote the book described it, I don't doubt a couple people wouldn't mind changing the way they live a bit.

-Think, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks for the book recommendation, we are going to read it and see if it's something we should pass out to other people in your situation. What did the book talk about?

Sacrifice

I am willing to give up something valuable like the guns, and the fame.

Why?

Because it only last so long before somebody tries or they do knock you off your feet. I'm willing to sacrifice my negative life style just to be a positive role model for my nephew and my little sister. I'm willing to be that role model that every young heart is looking for.

It may not seem like it or look like it, but I gave up a lot of negative stuff just so I can say I did something good with my life, and not just let it go to waste.

But really I want to be somebody in life, and not just known for sellin' dope, or all the above what I really want to do is be the president or the Mayor.

I know if I'm one of those, I will really change some negative hearts or maybe even change the world I know I can because I have the mindset to do so!!!

-Lil' Miami, Alameda

From The Beat: It's good to hear you talking so positive! What we hope now is that you've got some sort of a plan to make these dreams come true. What is your plan?

My Model School

If I was principal of the school, I would let students choose their own classes that they want to learn, anything that the students are passionate about. There would be teachers that the students are comfortable with learning, and lunchtime will be extended. School would end up an hour earlier.

During lunchtime it will be open campus so the student can be able to go to the corner store or any other food court to eat instead of the cafeteria. But they gotta go back once lunch end.

I would have classes in sculpture, cooking, video games, alteration, medicine, animals.

-Patrick, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire a whole lot about your school, especially the fact that you would let students chooses to study the things they're passionate about. On the other hand, how would you make sure that they learned the basics of reading and writing and arithmetic if they didn't think those things mattered much (and learned later in life that they do)? We're particularly interested in the things you would put in your school. Do you like sculpture, cooking, video games, alteration, medicine and animals? Tell us about those things in your life.

RIP

Rest in peace to all the fallen from the 'hood in Heaven
up to no good,
the whole hood miss you, we'll never be the same.
You put it down and earned your name,
but someone else wanted that fame so they took you out
the game
what can I say they always want to hate.
They took your life 'cause they wanted you to die.
Pay backs a bummer that's why I'm doing time.
The only reason you dead 'cause they caught you
slippin'
They emptied a whole clip aiming at your dome
these streets are cold you never know it's your last day.
Rest in peace to all the fallen gangsters
I pray for you every night but you never try to change
your life.
Now they all gone 'cause of your life, now they all gone
'cause of a gun fight.
It's what you chose right, just remember don't walk
toward the light.
I know you looking down on us, but what the hell, you
left this world too soon.
No one knows what to do without you.
We still kick it at the spot where you got shot
pour out my 211.
Hope you doing cool up in heaven.

-Dla, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a touching remembrance and tribute to friends lost, thank you. As you look back on these lost lives, show your friends respect by not making the same mistakes they did. How will remembering their lives make yours different or better?

What Do I Owe Myself

What do I owe myself? Man, that's a hard-ass question to ask myself. Let me see? I owe myself a better life! And what I mean by that is I owe myself a better education. I owe myself a high school diploma! A bachelor's degree. And I owe myself my own carpentry company! Yeah man, big thangs!

-Lil' Nicoya, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're right, Lil' Nicoya, these are big things. But they are not so big that you can't achieve them. Don't let what's happening in your life now keep you from going after these goals. Keep your eyes on the prize, and it's within your grasp.

Better Schools

If I ran the school, I would have letter programs — sports, music, science lab, math programs, I would try to relate to the kids that's in here. I will teach how to put cars together, not just take 'em apart. I would make sure they have job so they don't have to rob.

-Lil' Robb, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you have some very good ideas about how to improve our schools. Do you like the programs you put down here, like music and science lab and math programs? What are you passionate about studying? Do you hope to go to college? We hope so.

It Takes A Village

It takes a village to raise a child!
In my town it seems like miles and miles.
Down that road I've been!
Now here I go again.
I told myself, "No! I'll never go!"
But four months later I show!
I'm putting my mom through hell,
Coming back to jail.
It takes a village to raise a child.
Still I ask my mom how!
How can she put up with my drama,
Without me saying, "Sorry mama!
I did wrong," singing that same ol' song!
"I'ma change. I'ma move on!"
Ha! That's my favorite song.
It takes a village to raise a child!
I promise never to make my mom go another mile!

-Kia, San Francisco

From The Beat: You've been singing the lyrics without music/Lay down a melody to those words before you lose it/Keep that promise to your mom, you won't regret it/Until you do, to this cold system you'll be indebted/Yes, it takes a village, so why not join it/And add your gifts to adorn it

Growin'

Living in this world ain't easy for me
I try and try to be all I can be
I seem to always fall get up and fall again
BUT WHY?
Because I choose to always get high
Because I'ma ride or die
Because I look for the easy way to get by
I thought being perfect was life without struggle
But I seem to always look for drugs to smuggle
Had a dreams as a kid
About good things I did
But it seems little by little they fade away
I get deeper and deeper day by day
I know and think about what went wrong
While I sit around hitting my bong
I see the big hole I dug
Then I try and ease it away with a chug
Every night before I go to bed
I pray to god I don't end up dead
Because to see my mom crying in pain
For some stupid respect I tried to gain
But now that am older, now that I can see true reality,
Tear drops fill my eyes
Because now I know there ain't no perfect life.

-Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Life without struggle is only a childhood dream/Movie stories and TV are just not what they seem/But dreams are worth having, as long as they're real/Of family and job and school, you feel/You can climb out of that hole, one step at a time/The greatest poem is made up of individual rhyme/The past is behind, the future is long/If you stumble and fall, get up and move on/See the lowly caterpillar struggle and try/ As little by little it becomes a brilliant butterfly

Welcome Back

Soon as I stepped back in the cell, the devil said,
"Welcome back!
The prince of darkness back in hell." Then he gave me a clap on the back.
Chilling in a dank alley, shaking like a sick you know what.
My thoughts go blank. Then to my enemies I step back up.
See a rival... First thought is "Pegale!"
Second thought... "Let him walk away." Oh no, chale.
So he can come back and try to take my head.
But think, how can you kill something that's already dead?
Got rejected from heaven, then cast down
Where I spit fire like a dragon. Then silence the death sound.
Life-long foreigner, in the beginning, No hablo Ingles.
Soy Boriqua con diablo, AKA the hell raiser, so here is my kiss of death
I bite like a pit bull and my enemies bark like a perro.

-Gangsta Shadow, San Francisco

From The Beat: We wish we could dismiss your writing as that of a mad gangster (which you are), but it isn't as easy as that. You're just too good at what you do — which is to write powerful poetry in a language you had to learn second-hand. Do you even know the skills you possess? You have a very clear understanding of what you're capable of destroying, but do you have any idea of what you're capable of creating?

The Worst Mistake Of My Life

In my own point of view, I think I owe myself the right to make better choices. I'm starting to realize that I have to make better choices in life. Just being in here makes me realize because of one mistake it lands me somewhere that takes me away, from people I care for.

Being in here I believe is the worst mistake of my life. It's a good lesson but I could have done so much to avoid it. There are so many things that are going to surprise you. I was very surprised by being in here, but honestly there are so many things that I know I could have done to make it different. I should have been smarter. There's so many things I wish I could change in life but I know that there's no way that I can go back in time and change it. I love my life on the outs so I can't wait to go back.

-Dis Chick, San Francisco

From The Beat: If coming here has made you open your eyes so that you don't repeat the mistakes of the past, then maybe it was worth it. We wish you would tell us some of those things you could have done differently to avoid coming here, and the things you will be smarter about when you touch down so that this is a one-time experience only!

Talking To My Coach

Today I talked to my coach. He explained to me that we all have faults in life.

In the three years that I have played for Castlemont, my coaches never saw or heard me cry, but today was the day that they finally heard my voice sound sincere.

For the past couple of weeks, I've missed out on the basketball playoffs, as well as the championships! I can't believe I put my team through so much these past years. Now I finally realized how selfish I've been. Now that I sit in my room looking at these four walls, I know that I need to change.

-Missed-The-Game, Alameda

From The Beat: It's too bad you missed out on all the excitement, and that you couldn't be there for your team. But perhaps you needed to go this low to really change things around. You say you need to change— how? What are you going to do differently?

VT Always In My Heart

First time I saw you girl
You turned me upside down
I can't stop thinking about you
My head is spinning around
I've got to find a way
To get with you somehow
Girl I'm so crazy for you
You know I want you now
And every minute of every single day
I'm dreaming of how we could be
And every night before I go to sleep
I'm praying that soon you'll be here with me
Heaven, heaven oh heaven can't you help me
I'm down on my knees please help me
Can't fall asleep tonight
I don't know what to do
I hold my pillow but I wanna be holding you
And when I close my eyes
I always see your face
I know my happiness is only a kiss away
And every hour here in the dark
Every beat of my lonely heart
Tells me that I need to be with you
Heaven oh heaven what can I do?
Girl I'd give anything if you were here with me
Give anything you want and anything you need
I never thought that I
Could feel the way I do
But now I want to spend the rest of my life with you
And every day that we are apart
I'm shedding this love here in my heart
And every night before I go to sleep
I'm praying that soon you'll be here with me
Heaven, heaven, oh heaven can't you help me
I look in her eyes, now she's all I see
Heaven oh heaven can't you help me
I'm down on my knees... please... help me

-Ly, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The sadness in this poem falls like tears onto the page. Of course, you don't really wish she was with you; you wish you were with her. There's a difference. But as it is, the readers of your beautiful poetry will be the only ones to benefit from the longing your heart feels, and that is because you have a great gift to turn your pain into art. If we could substitute the real "her" for the "she" that your mind dances with, we would do it.

Stay In School

If I ran a school, it would have teachers that actually teach you something and have better looks. I'd also teach mechanics.

But I am not in school no more. I dropped out. Man, don't do it. Just don't! Get your education. I am telling you if I didn't drop out, I wouldn't be on the streets like I am. I know I can't tell you older heads nothin', but you youngsters stay in school, man, for real.

Take it to mind. You don't want a kid at fifteen do you? So stay in school. Stay off the streets. You know how it is. People don't know how hard is for y'all, but it's hard for me. My moms is dying faster 'cause all the stress I was putting her through. That's why I ran.

-Chris, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you're giving really good advice, Chris. In fact, it's so good, we wish you would take it yourself. We also wish you would explain some things that you only mention here. For example, what is your mom dying from? When you get out of here, how will you try to ease her stress? Will you go to school and stay there. You know that's what she wants for you to do. Can you give her what she wants?

The Game

In the cuts in the
Street, drug dealers, gangsters
Pimp, players, and hustlers.
Being a savage trying
To survive with out
Knowing they are the
Killers. Without good
Guidelines they can not
Learn to move forward.
Hustling, stealing chips,
And killing will not set
You free.
Many are falling into this game because of the
temptation for money, power,
or respect. Many claim
a gang or crew, in order to gain it faster. Not
knowing the fast lane is
a horrifying disaster.
In order to move on
You have to sit down and think
Willing hoping if you got it
Within. Knowing you need to
Stop, after a while you fall in your spot.

-Blaze, Alameda

From The Beat: "After a while you fall in your spot". You said it. ... you drop real wisdom in this poem... are these things you've witnessed or gone through yourself?

Hard Times

Growin' up I been through hard times
You see I ain't had the good life
Growin' up moms was on drugs
Dad was out committing crimes
Always in jail
He was even on drugs at the same time
At the time
We barely even ate
Moms was always strung out
So she never cooked for us
Then one day I got put in foster care
And from there
Things went downhill from there.

-Jamil, Alameda

From The Beat: Downhill in the sense of what you remember, but UPHILL in another way: Every experience you've had has made you who you are, has made you the wise and thoughtful young man you are becoming.

Growing Up

"It take a village to raise a child",
To raise a child you need a group
A group of adults who know,
Not a child trying to sleep in adult shoes.
To raise a child you need a group,
A group of leaders who've been to school,
A group of people who had down falls but made it
through.
To raise a child you need a group,
A group of people who you can privately talk to,
To raise a child you need a group,
A group to help support that child,
To help that child see through different eyes than you.
"It takes a village to raise a child"
"Yep I believe that's true"

-Bri, Alameda

From The Beat: There is a lot of wisdom in this piece, Bri. What can we, as a society do to create more groups like these—to ensure that we have this kind of positive village for all our children?

My Brother

He did bad things but to me he was my hero.
I loved him so much and for somebody to take him was
not cool, f
eel like killing somebody but I'm not.
My brother was cool in a way,
I don't know who shot him but God will deal with them.
I did not know my brother like other kids do they
brother, but we became close.
We became so close that I loved him but then he was
killed,
it's anger in me and I'm trying to lay it to rest.

-Baby Whoday, Alameda

From The Beat: We're so sorry you lost someone who you looked up to and loved. Losing someone can lead to anger and even revenge, but it sounds like you're choosing to let it be and move on. That's really hard and really strong of you. We're really impressed by your strength.

What I Owe Myself

I owe myself respect
I owe myself loyalty
I owe myself the desire of success
I owe myself a high school diploma
I owe myself a college education
I owe myself a nice husband
I owe myself the world
And watch me get...
I love my hatas

-Tory, San Francisco

From The Beat: Don't stop until you deliver on all you owe yourself. (Do you love your haters because God says to love them, or because they give you the motivation you need to succeed? Either way, we admire you for writing it.)

Real Talk

Homies against homies, yeah, the hood's been
changing
Lil' wannabes getting in just to be claiming
Don't know what they have to do just to be bangin'
Lil' one keep on slangin' but always watch yo' back
They yo' homies now, are they still gone be when you
holding racs?
Yeah, I rep mine but I'm always watch my surroundings
I been burned by my so-called homies that's why I
always watch whose around me
I'm paranoid don't even trust my boys no more
Tryna be hardcore and lil' ninja what for?
No regrets I already have my respect
Notice the 'hoods changing before it's too late
Not a new booty, not yet a OG
Listen 'cause a older homie ones sprinkle game to me
"Young Giggles," he said, "Choose yo' homies right and
don't trust nobody but yourself"
I learn that the hard way, now I don't even trust my own
self
Look into my eyes rewind and find
All the lies that made me now wise
It's my street to my heart, my 'hood to my soul
I'm asking my only friend to let me go
So I wont go through this bs no more

-Giggles, San Francisco

From The Beat: How many times have you handed your freedom away/ Because you're "down for a game" that you willingly play?/And where is that older homie who sprinkled that game?/Like you, in a cage, for the keepers to tame?/You are the one who holds the key/Not Satan, not homies, not even me/That which you "rep" is not even yours/No more than the fish who bites at the lures/You have brains, it is clear, but alone that won't do it/It's time to rep yourself and the rest... well screw it!

Love Not Lust

Love is unconditional so why take it granted
I'm locked the fuck up but you ask like I planned it
As you know shhh comes and goes
That's a good reason you ain't my sideline ho
No mails no calls nothin' at all
You getting' farther -- what's gettin' closer is these walls.
Then I just think what if the judge shot me 25 with an L
From you I'd see no mail
Well f--- it, it's in my nature to cheat
So you could do what you please and turn that cheek
Meanwhile I'll be gettin' shhh tight at Camp Sweeney
You now I love you, you know I care
No matter how hard I try I can't make it clear
F--- the world and everything in it
I'm set up to lose from start to finish
Still thoughts of my mind take me back to you
How we used to sip on Henny back in the old scoo'
Do you remember
Wasn't nothin' on my mind
It's a cold world so I turn it to crime
I'm tryna shine I tried to wine and dine
Still all a G thinks is that fine ass behind
Now I'm locked down cravin' for your touch
But I may remind you this is love not lust
Trust this ain't no crush
Every time I see you, a G still blush
Don't get me wrong I still don't give a #$%
What anybody think I'm still like genuine I'll always be the same old G
Realize one thing, I got love
But don't take my kindness for weakness.
I had love for you when Noey was just a fetus
Lust...fool you tweakin' all the time on E
I got so many reasons so all I ask is for a little trust
After all I got love for you baby this shhh ain't lust

-Baby Daddy, Alameda

From The Beat: You say you're set up to lose, but it's on you to decide whether to take the set up. You're so set on being a 'G', but it sounds like what you really want is to be a free man. Someone who can stand tall without being locked up behind bars? Someone who can hold up his head with pride and stand by his woman. What will it take for you to be that man.

The Game

Your closest patnas can be your worst enemies
I'm there with open hands for all the sins the game is sending me
I know how to realize the real from what foo's claim to be
Youngsta got drank in they bottle and rap is they melody
The game been telling me I'm down, but not just 'cause of my felonies
The game ain't a stranger, so listen to what I'm speaking
Your haters are always hiding, and yo' own homies stay creeping
Always watch yo' back and always have one eye open when you sleepin'
Remember the "homies" — the ones that were there when you messed up
Were they there writing you when you got locked up
Were they there when you were down or didn't have dough
Females is spreading their legs and wonder why they call you "hoes"
This is how it goes...
I'm a criminal to the system and a gangbanger to my PO
To the judge I'm a jail bird and I'm a alcoholic is all the DA think she knows
But I'ma keep throwing the dice gambling with my life
'Cause tomorrow ain't promised that I'ma still be alive
I always test "the other" before I grade 'em
Live and die by the gun, the trigga is what saves 'em
Trust nobody in this game — two out of three will tell their tale
I'm like this: love no ninja, fear no female

-Giggles, San Francisco

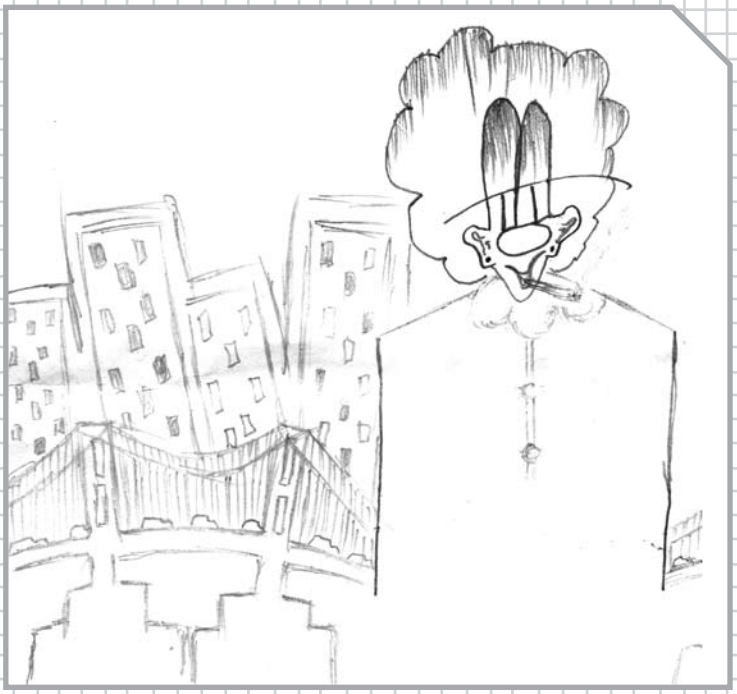
From The Beat: We changed your last rhyme scheme because, as you wrote it, it wasn't Beat appropriate, Other than that, though, you have great skills that make us wonder why you would be willing to keep gambling with your life. Of course tomorrow is not promised to anyone, but that doesn't mean that foolishness has no consequences or that self-preservation is not worth the effort. Whatever the DA may think about you, if you have a problem with alcohol, that's something you have to own and deal with, or the hole you've dug for yourself can only get deeper and harder to crawl out of. The trigger doesn't save people, it leaves them bleeding on the street with mothers and sisters crying in the background. You're right, your partners can be your worst enemy — except for one. And we hate it when that one is her own worst enemy!

Pain Went Through My Heart

Pain went thru my heart when I lost one of my close homies
I sit here and ask myself, why couldn't that bullet be for me? Maybe it just wasn't time for me to leave,
But I have to smoke some blunts of weed
In order for that stress and pain to leave.
One day I'll meet him again but for now in my heart
I keep my very close loving dead friend.
I remember it like it was yesterday
I'ma be a father and husband, and my homie would say
But little did he know that death for him was only a few days away.
He took two to the head
And at the scene unfortunately he was pronounced dead.
A couple of weeks later a funeral he had
Of course I was there for the homie that was always there for me And my back he had.
Losing him was very sad,
I felt a lot of pain and because he was very close to me
...it made and makes me feel mad and bad.

-Mac, Alameda

From The Beat: We're so sorry you lost your friend. But with these words you bring him back to life for a minute: We feel both the loss and the love you had for him. Thanks for sharing this powerful piece with The Beat!



My Time

Q-vo Beat this Chikillo from Oakland. Well I'm still here in the hall doing my time but I'm gonna go to ROP to finish my time so I could get out and be with my homies kicking it on the varrio (hood) and to be with my jaina (girl).

Well I'm just here still doing my time. I did the crime so I gotta do my time, but really I'm tired of being here, I miss my freedom and I miss being with my homeboys. The judge told me I'm gonna have to do 18 months. But, I'm not sure if I'm gonna be able to do it. Just gonna try to see was gonna happen after I do my 18 months. Well Beat this vato is out Alratos.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: 18 months may seem like an impossible amount of time but it's really not so long for a lifetime. Maybe you could use this time to appreciate what it's like on the outside so you can do what you need to do to stay out for good. It's hard not having your freedom, but the more you do for yourself with your time, the faster it'll go by. Get busy!

Good Intentions Bad Decisions

Growing up on the streets my momma always told me that getting into drugs would leave me hungry. She told me there would be put downs in life, but if I respect myself then I can make it in the world and go out with wealth. She told me to participate in school, get involved, but I didn't listen so I'm the hall.

-Lil' Seag

From The Beat: Sometimes you want to do good but then you get sidetracked from what you really trying to do. If you know what you need to do to get to where you want to be in life then do it. It's okay if you make mistakes, just learn from them. And if you make one it's not the end of the world. We all make mistakes.

What I Owe Myself

I owe myself a really big apology for being where I am. Alameda County Juvenile Correctional Facility Center. I wish I wasn't here, my life would be way better. But this is a life lesson to learn. I think I will never be here again. I learned my lesson from my friends, doing things they did mean to do. But I am going to change my life.

-Erie

From The Beat: How are you going to change your life from this priceless lesson?

Probation

What up Beat! This is Lil' Erin from Oakland. I want to tell y'all people that's on EMP home supervision or regular probation you need to pimp that shhh because if you keep coming back for violation your monkey butt going to camp or a group home.

-Lil' Erin

From The Beat: If you keep coming back you can also go to ROP or CYA. Either way you shouldn't be back period. The only spot y'all need to be going is home to your parents.

I Got Game!

I like to play basketball. I used to play on school team. I want to be a basketball player when I grow up. I'm going to go to college to be on a college team. I don't want to be doing the same thing when I get older, I don't want to be robbing people when I grow up.

-Antese

From The Beat: We don't want you to be robbing people anymore either. If you found something you love like basketball, all you need to do is stay on track and make your way to college and just play. You can make it happen.

My Release

When I went to court they told me that I will get released and I'm gonna have an ankle thing and have 200 hundred yards in my house. Well I'm gonna think about it if I'm gonna cut it but maybe not Beat.

-Debating

From The Beat: Don't do it man. If you want to stop coming in and out of jail you have to follow rules. You can't just keep breaking the rules and expect not to get in trouble.

A Life Of Crime

I'm living in a life of crime
It's like I'm blind
I can't see, I scream, I shout
For somebody to help me out
But then I can see
I see a new life so I run and tell my friends they disagree
They say I'm wrong
I say I'm gone
I don't need you man I can manage on my own
My mentality is physically hard as bone
I hear shots I start to run I look back my friends is laying there dead
And pow! I get shot in the head so don't wait like me
Until it's too late you when you six feet deep
No way to escape so don't wait until it's too late.

-Jamoni

From The Beat: A life of crime is only gonna guarantee you death or a long time in jail. So you're right don't wait till it's too late to escape it. Keep up with that mentality and you'll get far. You already know what that lifestyle brings.

Life And War

Man, life is a big place that you got to survive in.
Man bullets flyin' everywhere these days man,
people getting' killed everyday.
If you tryin' to get money on the corner,
police comin' to get you or someone shooting at you.
That why if the police catch you and you got a gun you got to protect yourself
if you want to live in this world.
If you get a car on rims people gon' hate on you.
Life is a war and war is life.
People dyin' everyday
moms cry about the baby dyin'.
But when moms lose they baby
The' little brother hurt because they no one to look up to,
to show them how to be a man.

-Lil' Devon

From The Beat: Yes, when we lose people who are close to us that we love, we mourn, and we lose so much, yet we have the memories, but when they go too soon in their lives we all suffer from the tragedy, but not as much as family and friends.

Younger Days

In my younger days I was a straight up thug
Ready to rob 'em for the' cash
But first I put on my all black ski mask
All while it's dark the whole block is sleeping
Breaking an entering through the windows creeping
'Bout to be the worst nightmare.

-Jamoni

From The Beat: We're glad you have put those days behind you, because one day you might rob the wrong person and they might get you for your valuables or maybe more importantly your life. We're glad you're maturing and changing old habits and starting to look at the bigger picture. What's your plans upon leaving the hall?

Hard Life Getting Better

Growing up in the streets is hard but not really. When you grow up with the solid homies you got and the solid family you have.

Growing up I've learned to have the trust of my homies. I know they'll ride with me to the fullest. Growing up is like a struggle for the most of us. How do you think we write this lil' writing thing for The Beat Within. Most of us are always getting locked up. We doin' some stupid things ey. When we do somethin' all of us have to be more careful of what we do.

Growing up wit the right people made me be laced up at a young age. I've learned to do my own thing on my own time. But I think about school too. You gotta finish school too or else you might end up working at a place like McDonalds. Na, I ain't doin' that I'm doing my own things wit the homies. But I'm also stayin' up in school too. That's the thing I want to do, I'm trying hard in school 2 keep my grades. Havin' good family and friends won't tell you to stop going to school when you say you're tired of it. They'll tell you nah homie get your education first bro that's what you gotta do real talk though. Don't stop going to school. That's what they'd say.

I've learned positive and negative things from the streets but when you got the homies you can trust it will be all good. So stay in school while you do your own thang growin' up.

-Percicido

From The Beat: That's some good advice you're giving out. If the people in your life are encouraging you to do things that are ultimately bad for you, then maybe they don't really care about you. Why do you think friends ask their friends to cut school or do illegal things with them instead of encouraging them to get an education? We'd love to know what you think about that.

What Do I Owe Myself And Family & Friends

What up Beat this Domo. Who do I owe? I owe my girlfriend NiNi for getting in her on a home pass and saying I got to see my family. I owe myself for coming here to jail I owe my other girl Tira for telling her I will never go to jail.

I owe her my word I owe her my life I owe my girlfriend KiKi my word because I lied and said I will never cheat or lie to her or never broke her heart I owe her my heart. I owe her my life. I owe my mom and my whole family for going to jail and not staying out. I owe my girlfriend Fatima for doing her best friend on the under and that's who I owe.

-Lil' Domo

From The Beat: What do you owe yourself? 'Cause judging by your piece you don't really owe nobody anything. You do owe yourself your freedom.

RIP Wicho One Love

Hey what's up Beat? Man I'm still here.

Well on Monday I called my brother-in-law and he told me some bad news. He told me my homeboy Wicho got in a high speed and he got shot seven times in the back.

I'm hella mad and my brother-in-law told me that they was tagging RIP Wicho forget the police. So that's hella sad because he was only like 15 or 16 years old so that's sad. Well RIP Wicho. One love miss you. I know you're in a better place I hope you resting good.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your homeboy passing away. It is sad when a youngster that's only 15 or 16 years old gets killed by a gun. He was too young. Why would the police do something like that? DO you have all the details? How can you take action and let the city officials and the community know?

Searching For Someone Special

Lately my heart have been in a place no one can think of, cold dark and lonely. I've been looking for someone who can make my heart alive, bright and with joy. The reason why I picked this topic is because people are lonely and need T-L-C at a time like this to help them get through the rough times. Well lucky me I found someone.

- Lil' Chill

From The Beat: You're right, having someone there for you, someone who has your back, really makes getting through the rough patches a lot easier. Whether it's family, friends, or a relationship, we all need someone to be there sometimes. Good for you that you know who that someone is.

Berkeley High

Going to Berkeley High I've had plenty of programs I could have used to my advantage. Last year when I was in the tenth grade I had drama class. I enjoyed different activities and plays we acted out.

Like one time we had to make up some type of play that was like a TV show, and my group based ours on something like a "Jerry Springer set up". It was a very funny show. Then I went to Afro-Haitian dance class. I loved my Afro-Haitian class. We had two shows each year. One before winter-break, and one before spring-break. I enjoyed learning dances from different countries. I love my school.

-Taco

From The Beat: So glad to hear that you love your school. Did you get to learn about other aspects of Haitian culture in your dance class? Do you think more schools should offer programs like that?

What Do I Owe Myself?

I believe that I owe myself the world and everything in it. I owe myself a diploma for all my hard work in school. I owe myself a release from jail for taking someone else's case. I owe myself love, respect, and my mama back, but most of all success.

My mother is the main challenge for me. She's stopping me from achieving my goals. She's too strict and always thinks negative things about me which makes me do bad stuff because she's not encouraging me to do good. If I had gotten encouragement from my mama, than I could have done anything.

-Lady Sassy

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear that your mother hasn't been there for you. Are there other people in your life who can give you the encouragement and positivity that you need? You need to look forward and focus on what is possible. Otherwise memories and bitterness towards your mother will hold you back.

Introducing Myself

Growing up it was tough on my block,
cops and robbers
I was never a cop,
to be a cop it was considered a joke.
I'm the same ninja still out here getting my dough.
Now and then you see my face on the news.
I'm Young-A everybody
I'm that Cambodian ninja, everybody know me.
Keep yo head up.

-Young-A

From The Beat: You may think being a cop is a joke, but right now they're on the outside and you're in the hall. Being the robber may seem like a better lifestyle, but almost every single time it will end up with being locked up. Is there another lifestyle you can think of – outside of cops and robbers – that you might want to end up with?

Last Time

It's my fifth time in j-hall. The judge and my PO said if I come back one more time, he's going to send me to a group home. I keep coming back for stupid stuff. At least now I know I can't outrun a tall police officer on foot.

I hope this my last home supervision release period. I'm going to do good, and not run this time. When I get out I'm going to school, pass home supervision and probation and be with the girl I like. This is why it's my last time coming to the hall. I've been coming since I was a young teen I just don't want to be coming when I'm eighteen.

-James

From The Beat: You don't have to keep coming back. You decide whether or not you end up back in the hall. It may be for stupid stuff, but sometimes you gotta just play the game and respect the rules so you can have a life outside with the people you want to be with.

Legit Grind

When I get out I'm going to get back in school and get a job and make some money to take care of my girl and my son. I also want to just get my life together. I want to be able to do lot for my son. And coming to jail aint helping him.

-Chris

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a good plan. We hope that you're not talking like cause you're locked up. We hope when you get out you do think about your son and try and take care of him.

A Young Man

I'm a young man,
I'm getting more older and more wiser
but I make dumb decisions.
I'm trying to better myself but I keep slipping into the streets
playing wit' guns, moving too fast,
tryin' to get that fast cash, but I need to slow down.
I grew up too fast and I need to act my age and stop coming to jail.
I'm here for a gun charge!
And I could've made the right choice but I wanted to do
what I wanted to do so that led me here,
the judge is talkin' 'bout another placement.
I gotta man up, do my time, if I wanna be a young man.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: Plenty to work on. Get yourself together and take on the task at hand. It is a matter of freedom or incarceration!

Thoughts On Growing Up

I think the phrase (it takes a village to raise a child) means, children should have more than a guardian to watch after them and have their back. I think kids should have a family that cares for them and make sure they become successful. I think kids should also have a role model so they will push themselves hard to accomplish their goals. Having good friends is another thing kids should have so if they can't talk to their parents about something they can trust their friend to keep a secret. Finally, I also think they should have themselves to trust by doing the right thing, and making the correct decisions.

-Lacey Boy

From The Beat: That's a really thoughtful way to explain the phrase. Family and friends are both really important in growing up, and can have a huge effect on a child. But like you said, that doesn't mean that we aren't responsible for our own actions. At some point in life we grow up and realize that everyone who did or didn't raise us had a big effect on us, but in the end it's in our hands.

What Do I Owe Myself?

I owe myself an apology. I won't never be coming to juvenile hall and I'm never coming back here. I am disappointed at myself but things happen and what I'm saying now is I'm not never coming back here ever and this place is for bad people and I'm not a bad kid.

I just play around a lot and now I see what playing get you. But now I know don't play with guns no more real or fake cause they both will get you inside of juvenile hall and now I know I'm not going to do it no more.

-Robert

From The Beat: You owe yourself a lot more. You owe yourself and us a promise that you ain't never coming back to the halls. Quit playing around and get serious 'cause life ain't no joke. You can still have fun but when it comes to your life or freedom take things seriously.

Something To Remember

A positive experience I will never forget is when I made a bet with my dad that if I get a 4.0 and honor roll he will give me $500 and take me out to eat. I pushed myself very very hard everyday but I never thought I could do it. The only thing that kept me reaching to accomplish it was getting my dad off my back by getting good grades.

-Lacey Boy

From The Beat: Sounds like your dad thought all you needed was some motivation to do well in school. We wonder if you worked so hard for the money or to prove to your dad that you could do it/get him off your back. Did you end up winning the bet?

My First Love

I fell in love at first sight on a wicked day of the year: Halloween. His name was Frank and he is the love of my life, or so I thought! The time I really need him he was not there for me-- the time I was locked up! He hasn't written me or even called my dad. I took his virginity, but for some reason I ended up with an STD.

He is the only person I've been with for almost a year. He told me that there is one person that gave him oral raw. He probably thinks I gave it to him, but I know I didn't so how do I tell him? Do I wait for him to bring it up or do I bring it up first? Do you think that's why he hasn't written me?

I love him and I know he loves me but I don't want him to leave me over a misunderstanding. I'm gonna wait 'till I get out and see him face-to-face unless he brings it up. Then I'm gonna speak my mind and if he doesn't believe me, we weren't meant to be. I love him with all my heart, and kiss his name before I go to sleep! Every night…

-G-Money

From The Beat: You gave yourself some good advice! Talking about STD's is hard but necessary. If you guys can get through this, and be honest with each other, you'll have a strong foundation for a healthy relationship. And if you don't get through it, as you say, perhaps it wasn't meant to be.

My Daughter

I want my daughter to grow up in a community that has a good school, good neighbors, and one of those neighborhood watch programs. That's why she lives with my mom in Castro Valley. My baby might only be 20 months old, but she still needs a healthy place to live and play. One thing that I do know is I won't raise my baby in the hood like the way I was raised.

-The Kings Wife

From The Beat: That sounds like a smart decision. Do you plan to live with them as well? What does Castro Valley offer that the hood doesn't?

Upsetting News

Today I found out my oldest brother is moving to Las Vegas in two weeks. This is very upsetting to me because he is the only sibling of mine that I have a relationship with. He is also my best friend. Since I'm in juvenile hall, I will not get to say goodbye to him because he will be gone before I'm released. I will also not be able to visit him because when I do get out I will not be able to leave Alameda county until my probation is over.

-Amber

From The Beat: Even though this is a terrible situation, you must know you are lucky to have a sibling you are so close to! Maybe he can visit you while you are stuck in Alameda, and you guys can talk on the phone or write. And if all goes well, you'll be off probation soon, and then you guys can be together.

County Boy

I'm a county boy dressed in blue
With the light brown khakis pants, with the Bob Barker shoes
I can switch my fit up blue duets pant with the matching top
Everything says Alameda County and this is why I'm hot
I'm a county boy dressed in blue
We all county property don't try to stunt ninja cause you county property too
I'mma county boy dressed in blue
With a small as cell, and some nasty as food
I'mma county boy ninja man you know what it do!

-Will

From The Beat: You a county boy and you sound proud of it! You should be a free boy and be proud of that. We know you don't like these county clothes, and county food. So just do what you need to do to get out and stay a free dude!

A Positive School Experience With Mr. Ghon

My 8th grade math class was the only class I passed last year. Normally I hate math, but I loved my teacher.

His name was Mr. Ghon, and he was an older teacher. I had his class last period, and I was often tired by the end of the day, but I never slept in his class. I miss that teacher even though he did yell at me a lot. But I got good grades in his class mostly because of it.

Most teachers don't care and if you don't do your work, oh well, you fail. Mr. Ghon, I think is the best math teacher. Three things that made him different: He explained stuff, he yells/cares, and he's just a good teacher.

-Coren

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this story about Mr. Ghon. Did being in his class make you look at school differently? If so, how?

T-Boy Games

It's this boy name T, I ain't gonna say his real name, I'm Just gone skip to his game!
It started off with me, well that's what he made me think,
But when I came to jail I met his other female and She hecka sexy just like me,
And you already know we clicked and started callin' each other wifey,
He cheated but it's good, because we both solid and Came from the hood.

-Lil' Chocolate Lady

From The Beat: Life is strange sometimes, isn't it. It's great you are friends on the inside, but how do you plan to deal with the situation when you get out?

The Stranger

Walking, pacing looking for my next stranger
And the second I meet him
Is the second he meet the banger.
Pockets on empty so I'm finna empty the chamber
Walking, pacing looking for my next stranger.

-Dante

From The Beat: There might be a stranger looking for you too—a stranger carrying a bullet with your name on it, especially if you let yourself get trapped in negativity!

Growing Up

When I was growing up I always had a good life
But everything wasn't always all right always getting into fights In this world it aint nothing nice
But my grandma always told me everything would be all right
And stay off them streets shooting dice but it's cool
I'mma just do what I do and keep my ass in school
But I aint no fool
All right Beat Within
Oh yeah and I think my grandma should be community members cause she always helped me grow up from a child to an adult. She's the most special person in the whole world.

-Rameal

From The Beat: Part of growing up is learning from your mistakes. You grow and you learn. You get in trouble and you learn. You just need to realize it and decide whether you wanna grow up and mature. If you wanna keep getting in trouble and go to jail then that's another choice that you can make too.

I'm Back

Hey Beat, what's good? Yeah I'm back again, but only for a change of placement. I was actually doing really good at my group home, and I was just about to take my GED today. But hey, everything happens for a reason. I'm glad because now I'm real close to home and I get to see my daughter more. And for some real odd reason I'm happy to be back. It feels like home to me. I have run into lots of my peoples. I'm not yet in my unit but I will be soon. 'Cause this unit is the stuff.

-The King's Wife

From The Beat: How do you feel about the fact that you see juvenile hall as home? Our gut instinct is that this is dangerous, because it means you might keep coming back again and again. If you hated it, perhaps you would do anything to stay away. What are your thoughts?

How I Look At Myself

I think I'm the queen of everything, and I know I have a bad attitude when I don't want to do something. I like doing my hair and putting on my earrings. Everyday I'm at a new store buying earrings. Well, before I got in the hall. Anyway, I love to be different, look different and have different hairstyles.

I demand my respect and I fight for it as well. And if you don't respect me, you will get disrespected, fast! How I grew up is you can either go hard or go home. I always hung out with the big girls, not the little ones, so that really made me who I am today.

All I'm looking for from a dude is real love, and for him to give me his all.

-Lil' Oakland

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this about yourself. And of course, we want to know more! How do you think it affected to you hang out with the big girls? Did you have a mentor? Was she a good or a bad influence? And what do you tell young girls now, who remind you of yourself?

Better Myself

When I get out I want to better myself, in my education, and who I hang out with. Some people that you think are your friends, ain't really your friends. They could just be using you. Be careful who you hang out with. I want to finish learning how to put together bumps. That's what I want to do when I get out.

-Michael

From The Beat: You can do whatever you put your mind to. But first you gotta stop coming in and out of here. Cause your learning capabilities are gonna be limited in jail. When you're out you can learn whatever you want, and don't let anything stop you.

Schools

My school could have had better teachers to teach the students. Some of the biggest changes that public schools need is better school supplies. I did not attend school regularly because I really did not like school that much. No, there is nothing that would make me go everyday.

-Derrick

From The Beat: You can come up with almost a million excuses for not wanting to go to school. But there's two things you need to know. Whether or not you like school it's the key to your future, unless you're planning on being a rap star, or playing professional sports, etc. Education is the key to getting paid. You can't get rich on the block. And that path can guarantee you a lifetime of pain in jail or in a casket.

Way Too Deep

I am in way too deep.
I am in way over my head.
Consequences lay ahead of me
Are something I dread
I've seen the lowest of low
I've been the highest of highs
But once it's all over something
Inside you dies
I can be a coward
Lower my head and cry
Crawl inside my cell
Lay down and die
But I know life ain't over
My heart tells me to fight
And if I look hard enough I can see my freedom sight
Though I am behind this door,
I start my life anew
Despite these walls around me
My sun will still shine through.

-Lil' Corey

From The Beat: What does that freedom look like? What do you think will be different about your life once you get out? What would you like to change? What would you like to keep doing?

It Takes A Village

This expression I believe means that not only your parents raise you, but where you grow up also determines how you turn out as an individual.

For example if you grow up in an area of lots of crime and violence the odds are against you and you most likely will be sucked into crime.

On the other hand if you grow up in a good clean low crime rate area you will most likely not be sucked into crime. For everyone it takes a village and for me the village is still going to work.

-Travis

From The Beat: You're right. The environment you grow up in does have some kind of influence. But if you're sucked into crime and come to jail it's up to you realize what kind of life you want to live and for how long. Cause you know the fast life is only guarantees death and jail time.

Off The Hook

The weekend before I had come in here I heard about some parties and they was supposed to be thick and hecka females there. The day of the party my mom said I could go so I waited until my brother got ready to leave and left with him to the party. We meet up with my friends we was going to the party with and didn't even know what party we was going to because it was two of them.

And the buses didn't run to one of them so we went to the only one we could go to and left. We got to the party and only ma cousin was on the guest list but I used my other cousin's name that didn't go and they let all of us in and it was like eight of us. The party was cool, and it kinda had a lot of females and I had a lil' bit of fun until the police came.

We left and I was scared to go home because my mom said I couldn't go and I went any way. On our way home we decided we was going to my sister's house. I went home in the morning because it was my grandma's birthday and we was going to her house fo' a lil' party.

I was scared so when I got home I got my clothes out and jump in the shower. When I got out she didn't even say nothing 'bout it the whole day and I was off the hook and I was happy.

But the next day my PO came and picked me up and took me to jail …now I'm in here telling y'all my story.

-Daray

From The Beat: Thanks for telling us your story! It sounds like the fun wasn't quite worth the drama that came after it. Did your PO now what you'd been doing?

School

I just think back when I was doing good in school. And in ever since the eighth grade that's when I started falling off track. I was coming to school high, not going to my class, disrespecting teachers. Now I think back I should have took school more serious.

-Joseph

From The Beat: You know you're sitting here thinking back on everything you did but you know what? You can't change it. You made some mistakes that you obviously regret so just learn from them. So just move on and think about how from now on, you're gonna take school more serious.

It Takes A Village…

It means that you can't raise a baby by yourself.

-Kelvin

From The Beat: It depends. There are plenty of single mothers, and fathers that do it.

The Days When I Don't Want To Go Home

A few weeks ago it was very hard for me to go home. I was kicked out of my house from my grandparents for disrespecting the family. It was very difficult for me emotionally. Instead I stayed at my friend's house that I've known since I was three. I was there for about two weeks.

My friend's mom knew what I was going through and understood my feelings. I didn't know when it was a good time to go back home, because I hadn't talked to them since the day I was kicked out. I was violated and brought back to the hall.

-Solomon

From The Beat: It's good that you were able to talk to your friend's mom. Have you had a chance to talk to your grandparents yet and make peace with them? Because their love for you is real.

Hella Mad

Man, I'm hella mad cause I've been here for one month and I still don't know how long I'm gonna be here for. I been to court two times and I gotta go back in three weeks. I ain't even trippin' though, as long as I get out soon, 'cause I'm not even supposed to be here. The shhh is that we on lockdown. We be in our room all day, we don't get no phone calls no more, we can't get no rec, we can't play no games, no basketball no extra food no movies, we can't do shhh.

They give you one hour if you look out the window, I think that's BS, because they expect us to be in our bed or in our little desk we got. I can't wait to get out of lockdown.

-Angry Youngsta

From The Beat: We hope you hate this enough to never come back!

What's Up

Hey what's good Beat? This is Yoyo coming from this unit. Well I've been in and out for hella long and this shhh is getting tired and old. Man I still remember my first time being locked up for days and I thought I was never going to get out. Well I got sent to camp did 9 ½ and got out then four months later got locked up and sent to a group home. I messed up hella much got kicked out and went back.

Then ran and I caught a new case I did eight months for nothing. But homies check it out do your time and get out do some legit shhh and do your hood shhh on the side so you won't get caught up man. Don't be fake be true to your shhh homies. Well stay up, with much love and respect.

-YoYo

From The Beat: Man sound like you were moving too fast. Be cool. Do your thang legit but also don't half step it man. You can't be doing illegal things and expect not to get caught. Even if you're doing it part time you're still gonna end up getting caught.

Raised By The Hood

Why do you like me when it takes a village to raise a kid? It means the people you hang around with are from the village! They teach you about life and what it's about and get you to thangs around the neighborhood, like hold it down for the hood and rep your block and smoke purple and bust at anybody get out of line.

I was raised by young G's from the hood. My mom and dad told me to stay in school and graduate from high school and get a good job, but I never did.

-Charles

From The Beat: Do you think that being locked up will change how you feel about your dad's advice?

Liking Money Too Much

For me growing up I had everything I needed: Mom, dad, family and they supported me no matter what. But at the age of 10 even though my Mom and Dad kept money in my pocket...

I came to liking money so much that I decided to step in the streets and mob it out. Once I seen how much you can spend money and make it right back that's what I decided to do. Until this day I'm gonna stay mobbin'.

-Lil' Dee

From The Beat: Your mom needs your money, but what she needs more than anything else is to know that her baby boy is safe and successful and going somewhere in life. Is "stayin' mobbin'" how you expect to do that?

A Better Day

I see a better day when I don't gotta lie
I see a better day when my family don't gotta cry
I see a better day when I don't get blood in my eye
And they sayin' open the safe
So until
Then I got my gun
So big homie, this ain't checkers
This ain't no game
And when them boys getcha ninjas
The first thing they say is ya' name
Ninjas see you shinin' so they try to jack you for your chain
So when you finally trust a ninja you got a shotgun at yo' brain
This ain't no game
Oakland California
Ain't nothing but a pit of danger
When I see a better day
That's when I let out all my anger
And I don't got no group therapy
That's why I keep a banger
And in order for me to win
And see a better day
I gotta get all those broke ass folks out my way

-Young and foolish

From The Beat: The thing about the better day you describe so beautifully is that the only way to GET there is to take a step towards it yourself. Put down the gun, for starters, and get away from the lifestyle that makes you use it.

Goals

When I get out of the hall this time I plan on taking the CHSPE and trying to get a student loan and go to a trade school.

-Chris

From The Beat: Good thinking! Do something while you're still young and got time so you can start earning some real legit paper!

It's Like This

Man this Erin telling y'all about females. They be playing with your head. I had this female name "J" that was on me something tuff and she was from Oakland. When I went to a group home and came back to the hall I found out that she was up in here for prostitution, and didn't bring me no dough. So I don't trust females. They just want you at that time. Yea I said it.

-Lil' Erin

From The Beat: Just because you think one female played you don't mean that all the rest of them are like that. You just have to be careful on who you trust all together. Anybody can do you wrong whether it be a dude or a female. As for a female paying you, please, unless you are up to no good yourself. Earn your own cash!

It Takes A Village, Meaning...

Meaning it takes more than just two sometimes to make a child understand what life is really about. Me growing up all I needed was my mom. She put me up on game about all there was to know. She showed me how to make and get money the legal way.

Then there was the illegal way that I learned from others around me. To me getting money the illegal way is the way to make a lot of money underage. But me I get it the best way I know how.

-Lil' Teddy

From The Beat: Which way is the "best way" now that you've seen what happens when you try to make it the illegal way?

Three Questions, Three Answers

1. What I owe Myself.
I owe myself an education, because I've been taking it for granted my whole life. I need to just settle down and go to school so I can be successful in life unlike some people I know but don't but don't mention

2. Right to learn:
In school it's mostly follow orders and be quiet, but if school was more interactive that might encourage more kids to go. I know I would have. School need more activities and programs that would entice more kids to participate in, so I think the $5 Billion cut from CA schools is a big mistake,

3. A Positive School Experience:
When I was in the 6th grade my teacher Mr. P's class was one of my favorite because he did activities that help you learn and his class was overall just fun.

-Malach

From The Beat: Maybe if you put your efforts into finding another teacher like Mr. P, and really turning to him (or her) for advice and learning, it would help you take that next step towards college (where the classes are a lot more interactive.)

My Family Won't Go Through What I Did

Where I was growing up I was to learn only one thing and it was to rep Hayward. I like that I was raised there because that's where I accomplish most of my good work, and that's where I will finish growing up and raise my children, have a good family. I'll make sure that nobody in my family does not become like me and go through what I did -- the hardships and all the them bad memories.

-Ivan

From The Beat: How will you make sure of this? What will you do to keep your family safe? What will you need to change in your own life?

Let Me Be Yours

Let me be yours,
The one who will provide for you
The one who would die for you
I'm gonna wipe away your tears
Hold you near when you in fear
Never let you go because you're my dear
You make my heart beat fast like its in third gear
As long as I have you I'ma be happy even if it rains and pours
But I still forgot to ask you-- will you let me be yours

-Maniac

From The Beat: This is a beautiful love poem, now you have to get yourself out in the free world so you can prove you're for real to your girl!

Never Knew My Father

Growing up as a kid I didn't know my father. All I had close to a father was my cousin. He taught me everything he knew.

By the time I was 10, he just left me, so the next only thing I was going for was the homies.

I got jumped into a gang and people treated me with respect. It was a good feeling. I grew up to fast, it was like I'm missing something in my life. Yeah so as having homies as family is a good and a bad thing.

-Calvin

From The Beat: When you compare the good with the bad, which do you think wins. In the end, has being in a gang been good for you?

Thankful for My Big Brother

Out of all the things in my life, I am really thankful for my big brother. The reason I say my big brother because he's the only one who told me the right things to do in any situation no matter what it was. Plus I know if I need some help in anything he was right there by my side even if it was my fault. I get sad when I go to jail because he's the main person who's hurting inside.

Sometimes he even thinks he could have been a better role model for me when is not true cause my brother never been to jail and he will be 19 this year and he has dreams to go to college. So when I get out he can provide for both of us which to me means a lot 'cause lately I been running these streets with my so-called friends.

But since I been in jail the only person who writes me was my brother so any body who thinks they have real friend blood is thicker than water

-Nell

From The Beat: Your brother sounds like a great person who really cares for you. But tell us this – if you have learned this powerful lesson, why was there still a turf call in your signature? Isn't it time to put that behind you?

What I Lose When I Get Locked Up

I came into the hall about a month ago. I was supposed to go see my grandfather, but the day before I was going to go do that was when I came in here. I called my brother and he told me that my grandfather went to the hospital and has been there for a few days.

I called my brother a few days later and he told me that my grandfather had cancer and died last night…I didn't get to see my grandfather much because I always end up fighting with my uncle that lives with him.

And because I came in here, I'm never going to be able to see him again. There are two reasons why I couldn't see my grandfather, one cause I get into some dumb ass fights with my uncle and second because I got locked up. So I'm going to go to a group home, pass that and go home and stay out of here because I lose too much every time I came in here.

- Man this shhh ain't right!

From The Beat: We are so sorry you lost your grandfather, and yes, you lose the passage of time and the natural rhythms of life when you are locked up. You said it best – it ain't right!

Time To Get My Life On Track

Growing in San Francisco I stayed in the projects with my mom and my sister. My mom couldn't take care of herself or me and my sister.

So I hit the block and posted with the thugs. Then I got caught up and the police arrested me my mom an my sister, placed me in a foster home out here in Hayward, an put my sister in a group home. The neighborhood I live in not violent and now I know what time it is. It's time to get my life on track with the help of my guardians.

Living in a foster made me angry 'cause I didn't like people telling me what to do especially some one who tries to act like my dad. But I know I got to deal with it. I'ma be going through things a lot harder.

-Edward

From The Beat: Do you get the feeling that your foster parents like you and care about you? Are they trying to enforce rules to keep you safe? The most important thing for you now is to "get on track" like you say – what are your dreams for the future? If you have a goal, it will help you stay on track.

Staff in the Hall can be Role Models

I think staff in the hall like Tib are the ones who care about us.

He talks to me all the time about becoming a man, but I have yet to step up to the plate. At that he just told me in order to stay focused sometimes you have to isolate yourself – it's like putting yourself on punishment. All the staff in the hall the ones that care like Tib, Miss Brady, LJ, DB, Nero, old school etc etc. They're the ones that tell us to man up and speak for what's right for ourselves.

So that's why I think the staff at the hall are my role models.

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: What are the things you would need to do to step up to the plate and be a man? In what ways do you think you've matured in here? And in what ways are you still struggling?

Love Is Unconditional

I remember how we'd chill so deep
Keeping the product moving we don't get no sleep
We went from growing weed in the hill
To messin' around with crack and pills
Got ammunition like a Navy Seal
I wish a fool would slide through
We'd hit 'em up, lay his ass down smooth.
Getting money, we'd bang outlaw
"It ain't fun, if we can't all ball"
They called me Lil' T, the lil' homie in the click
So as you know, this lil' homie didn't know shhh
Forget it, now I'm in county hall
Damn homies don't even accept a collect call
Ain't no kind of freedom, it's like I'm living in hell
Fake friends can't take five minutes to write me mail
Now I know why OG said forget friends
I guess that's growing up and becoming a man
Eh homie, if you feel this, then forget friends, family first
Trust a fake friend and you end up hurt
Before I go I'm gon' leave something like this
Trust no ninja and love no female.

-Tony

From The Beat: Doing dirt makes clean people dirty – doing bad brings out the bad in all of us. We're not knocking your homies, because deep down, they probably have good hearts despite the bad things they've done, just like you, but what you say here about discovering who you can trust once things get ugly is all true. Do you feel like you trust your family better now?

Encouraged To Go To School

I remember when my partner encouraged me to go to school. I remember when I was twelve, he used to chase me until he caught me and walked me to school. I use to hate it when I was I little, but know I appreciate it because now I know that he was only tryin' to better my life.

That's why he's one of my closet patnas till this day. He used to help me with my homework and everything.

-Michael

From The Beat: Is he himself still on a positive track? Because if so, it sounds like he could really help you stay focused on making your life better.

Hate

'Till this day I got people that hate
'cause I'm getting mo' money
they think I'm takin' off they plate.
I thank God for waking me up everyday..
Y'all think y'all know, you suckas can't relate.
If y'all don't know then life is a roller coaster
You don't play your cards right
then your life will be over.

I'm on a mission I ain't trippin' always aimin' never missin' Never slippin' can't handle the heat stay out the kitchen. You got a role in this life better know what it is to be a victim or a shooter or successful then.

I love my life to the fullest wouldn't give it away so to them suckas out there why must y'all hate?

-Lil' D

From The Beat: You got a role in this life/Better know what it is. Good advice – so what is your true role in this life? Is it to wind up on the streets? Or do you have bigger dreams? If so, what are they?

The Funniest Day Of Your Whole Life

The funniest day of my life was when me and my cousin was at Alta Bates hospital and we was messing with this lady, trying to get a cigarette from her and she started getting smart with us. So my cousin shay pulled her again and told her to shut up. So the fat lady started calling the police. So then we ran down the hill, got caught and came to the hall.

-Quilla-Bo

From The Beat: This doesn't sound funny at all! What if two people had been treating your grandma that way? Especially if she was at the hospital, who knows what kind of pain she might be in, or why she was there. It sounds like you were hurting another human being for no reason. We're not trying to disrespect, we just don't get the joke here.

The Funniest Day

The funniest day I had with my cousin was when we stole my Auntie's car. We was on our way to Frisco but we stopped in Sobrante. And we started swinging that thang. We was talking to our potnas, and then brah was gonna hop in, but he had a pistol so he went to the cuts and put it up.

Nate told him that our car was hot, so he gave us five and said it's good. So we drove off when we got to the spot, Quilla hit another car by accident. We hopped out and ran, but this lady talked us into calling our parents. So we called and pops came and picked us up and we got whooped.

Then I was out the next day.

-Shay

From The Beat: Did you apologize to your Auntie for stealing her car? What did she say? It seems like your fun came at the expense of a lot of pain – in your family and then eventually for yourself.

Kyle's Vampire Story, Chapter One

Today will be exciting, because I'm starting my wicca class. Both human and vampires get to go.

I met this really pretty vampire girl and she's about my age, a little younger.

So I walked up to her and said, "Hi my name's Lark. What's your name?"

She said "Hi I'm Trice," and smiled at me. "Are you new to class?"

"Ya, how long you been going?" I answered.

She said "I'm new too. Maybe we can hang out."

"Sure."

"Alright, walk me home after class, meet me here." We were standing by the fountain.

Class was boring: lot of lectures about safety and how dangerous magic can be. It was boring 'till my last class where me and Trice were in the same class. We sat next to each other. I was daydreaming when Trice grabbed my thigh. It startled me and I jumped. She apologized and I said no need I liked it. So she grabbed a little higher up. Before we knew it we were kissing each other. Then the bell rang. I walked her home and carried her books about the history of wicca.

In the morning I heard gunfire and smelled gasoline. I ran to my father's room and it was a blaze, so I ran to Trice's house after putting on my long sleeves, lung coat, smoke mask, pants and shades. Her house was being attacked by three men. I took two down and ripped out their throats and the other one got shot.

I had to take down three more before finding Trice. I covered her in thick blankets and carried her out and ran to the thick forest. I only stopped when the sun was completely blocked out. I built a small structure to temporarily live in. The structure was made of branches, leaves, and clay. It kept out the sun but wasn't luxury.

After building the structure I ran back to my community. I got there just when the men with guns were leaving. I caught up with one of the last cars to leave and opened the door. I ripped the gun from the driver's hands and grabbed his throat and ripped it out. I threw him out and drove the car back to the forest. I got back to the forest and put her in the car and drove to a community.

When we got to the community it was just getting dark. When Trice woke up she started freaking out. I pulled over as she was getting out of the blankets.

"Where the hell am I?" Trice screamed.

"In some human community in Washington just up north" I said, calm as possible, with just a hint of sadness. After I told her everything I knew about what happened, she asked "What about everyone else?"

"Dead." My voice cracked.

"Why didn't you save them?" she screamed at me from the back seat.

"Your family was dead when I got there and I couldn't carry more than one. Two men were just entering your room when I killed them. Then they burned down our community with gasoline."

Two days later we found a family who we liked. At least we thought they were a family, they were roommates. They lived in a five bedroom house, there were four of them, two males and two females. I liked Mike and Lisa. They smelled and looked nice, but they are hardly enough for two days, I needed to find four more. Trice liked Tom and Brook but she needs to find four more too. We snuck in and bit them in their bedrooms. They accepted us, so they loved us and thought we were interesting. They ask a lot of questions.

Trice didn't have any clothes before we met our new human friends, and I only had what I had on. So Brook bought some clothes for us. She was a surgeon so she had a lot of money.

We still had the car I took. I finally decided to search it. It looked as though the gunmen liked blades as well. There were eight knives in the glove box; two switch blades, two boie knives, two daggers, two army knives.

In the trunk there were six swords; a broad sword, a long sword, a ninja sword, a samurai sword and a scimitar. In the trunk under the swords was an assortment of pistols, SMGs, assault rifles and ammo. In the center council I found a map to Adimond Mine, and on the back was a map of the inside.

Two days later we went to the mine. When we got there, three trucks were parked outside the mine. One guy was watching the trucks. I pulled out my pistol and shot at the man. I missed and the bullet hit the truck. He looked around, but by the time he saw me I was swinging right at his chest. As Trice and I were walking into the entrance we smelled and heard people coming towards us. Trice and I climbed the walls and clung to the fourteen foot ceiling 'till the men walked under us. I let go and took off on three before I hit the ground. Trice was shooting down at the remaining humans..

Trice dropped down to search the bodies while I got to work taking the wheelbarrows to their trucks. Trice found $800, 3 cut diamonds, 2 carats each, and three long knives. She gave me one of the long knives. Trice and I took out 8 between us before we got to the vein of diamonds. I picked up the jackhammer and got to work on the richest vein, and Trice picked up a pick ax and we worked 'till we broke through the wall. It was uncharted on the map, so we added it, then went in with an oil lamp and a couple of flash lights.

There was a stone box with a slide-off lid in the middle of the room. We opened the stone box and found a bunch of knives, swords, axes, hammers, and all of them had gems on them. I took a long knife that had a black blade and 4 rubies on it.

Trice said "Aww, it's your kind of stuff."

I laughed. "I know, but I like your stuff too."

She punched me. "Let's check these passages. Maybe we'll find a bed."

She punched me again.

"Oww, that one hurt!"

So we went through the first tunnel and found a skeleton holding a necklace with a spider pendant.. I grabbed it and put it on. It came alive and crawled down my shirt and stuck its legs into my chest and sunk its fangs in.

I passed out and went into convulsions, spraying webbing from my wrists, or so I'm told. When I awoke, the room was full of webbing. Trice was right next to me. I looked down my shirt and the spider pendant had its legs in my chest, attached so I couldn't remove it.

After a minute I said "Let's check the next room," she said ok.

We got to the next room and another skeleton was sitting in the middle of the floor, with another necklace. This one was a lightning bolt. I grabbed it and asked is she wanted it. She shook her head so I put it on. It shocked the hell out of me and burned itself into my upper chest. This time I didn't pass out though.

In the next room was a skeleton holding a necklace. This one was a bat with a skeleton head.. I asked if she wanted this one and she said she did. I put it on her and it dug its claws into her right upper chest, giving her radar. I said "two more to go." She nodded, and we went to the next room. This room had a statue holding a necklace with

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a snake pendant. She took it before I could ask and put it on. The snake coiled around her neck and started eating its tail 'till it was tight around her neck. Her pupils turned to vertical slits. I started to laugh, she hissed "What?" I just laughed harder, her tongue was slit halfway down the middle. I said between outbursts "Your eyes, and your tongue!"

She pulled out her mirror and said "Oh my gossssh." We marveled at the next room. It was full of sacrificial weapons. "I call dibs on the spider and lighting bolt stuff" I said.

"Ok, if I get all the snake and bat stuffssss."
I started to laugh but stopped when I saw this cube just big enough to fit two weapons into. I showed her and she said it's for fazing weapons. I asked her where she saw that and she pointed at one face of the cube that nothing was written on. I checked what time it was and it was 8 a.m.

I pointed to my watch, she looked at hers and asked why she wasn't asleep. "Maybe the necklaces," I said. I grabbed a spider dagger, and a dagger with the lightning bolt sign on it, two swords -- one of each, two hand axes one of each, two short swords one of each, two battle axes one of each, and ten knives, five of each. I put the two battle axes in the cube and closed and opened it. Now there was only one. I had a spider with a lightning bolt in its abdomen. It had a small hole at the top between the blades and shot electrical nets.

I did the same with the knives. They shot a thin electrical web that sticks to the foe and when let go, propels itself into the enemy.

I am now carrying 16 bladed weapons. When we got to the trucks, our human accomplices were waiting. Trice bit Tom, and he let out a moan. I bit Lisa and she screamed. Then Trice came up behind me and bit me. I let out a gasp and turned around and kissed her.

Tom and Lisa asked when we were leaving because it was close to sun up. "How about now?" I asked.

Tom and Lisa nodded, and we were off. When we got home it was burned to the ground same as the rest of the town. "Sell some of those big chunks of diamond in the next town over," I said to Brook and Lisa. They nodded and took all the big chunks of diamond to one truck.

When they were gone I looked through all the rubble. I found the remains of several bodies and four half burnt bills. Everything else was gone. As I was kneeling I punched the ground and electricity shot up all around me. I was like "WOAH!"

"Ya, WOAH!" said Tom, Trice and Mike.

Trice was like "That shot up like 50 ft!"

"Ya, now all I gotta figure out is how to shoot webbing," I said.

"Try this," said Trice, and she showed me something with her hand. So I did what she did and I shot webbing out my wrist.

By the time Lisa and Brook got back I could shoot electrical nets out of my wrists, shoot streams of electrical webbing, and shoot electrical web bullets. I could even shoot electricity off my fingers.

Well, anyway, Trice learned how to use her bat out of lead power, that's what I call it anyway.. She shoots this burning, flaming bat at whatever she chooses. Brook and Lisa made $14 million by selling two uncut diamonds. The other ones they didn't want.

We put the duffle bags, full of $100 bills, in the back of the trucks and started towards N.Y.C. We stopped to buy clothes. We all got three black hoodies, three black trench coats, three pairs of black boots, twelve black T's, twelve pairs of black jeans, 12 pairs of under clothes, and 2 paris of dark sun glasses. That excursion cost $14,000.

When we got to NYC we got a very large home with roommates. The home had five bedrooms three bath rooms.

The people already living there were really nice. They were goths and they thought Trice's eyes were contacts. There was five girls and three boys.
I liked the girls, I bit four of them, their names were Rachel, Loha, Jackie, Tina, and Porcha.

The ones I bit were Rachel, Jackie, Tina, and Porcha. Trice bit Jake, Rob, Titto, and Loha. (TO BE CONTINUED…)

-Kyle

From The Beat: This was an exciting and action-packed first chapter of your vampire saga. One thing we are confused about it whether Trice is like Lark. Can she survive in daylight, or does she have to hide from the sun. Also, do the humans they bite become vampires as well? Does that mean they become immortal? Do they ever have a choice about becoming vampires, or do Trice and Lark just take what they want?

More Of Me

I'm surrounded by killers, drug dealers and thugs
Gangtas and money, guns, sex and drugs
At time I'm duckin' from slugs 'cause I ain't tryna get shot
I cherish life like my mom, although I post on the block
The spot will always be hot
like what I spit from the tongue
The cops be settin' up stings and I ain't tryna get stung
I heard that life is too short but yet we all live it fast
So I'm about what I'm doin' not what I did in the past
I'm lookin' on to the future I got my mind on my cash
And if you step on my toes don't be surprised if I smash
I'm from the streets, pack the heat so I sow what I reap
I love the game and what I claim
that's why I got in so deep
For my set I will creep and play for keeps like I does
Plus for the suckers and marks
I be what you wish you was
I keep thuggin' so hard like I don't know no good
But every time I'm doing right I end up misunderstood

-Gumby

From The Beat: You're out now, back on the streets, and we hope you're making choices that will reflect your talent, your ambition and all the growth we've seen in these months at The Hall. You're too good to wind up a jailhouse poet.

I heard that life is too short but yet we all live it fast

Act My Age

I am going to grow up and act my age, not act like something I am not or want to be. I am going to just be myself. I am not the type of girl who always gets into trouble. I always get straight A's I am not a bad kid …ok I might smoke weed on a Friday or Saturday when I am going to a party, but other than that I am a good gir.

I am going to become a masseuse and help people with their back problems or just make them feel relaxed, so that they could feel good. And I am going to work at the same spa my cousin works at on the cruise ship called Norwegian Cruise Line. That's my goal for growing up.

The end!

-Anonymous

From The Beat: This is a good goal! What happened last time to take you off track? Do you think that if you found yourself in the same situation, you would make a decision that took you off track?

Sorry Mom

I'm just a youngsta growing up in the Bay
where I was raised
Through my life I had to deal
with all the stress and the pain
I put my mom through a lot
now thinking back I regret it
I know I can't change the past
but I can change the present
I wanna make a difference and leave my old life behind
Because the life I'm living now is just full of crime
And I can see now back then I was blind
I was ignorant, dumb and never spoke my mind
But if I did I wouldn't be in this mess
I wouldn't of got locked up
putting my mom through the stress
She never gave up trying to help and it was all out of love
I bless the Lord for giving me a mother sent from above
And I honestly say she is my one and only
I love her with all my heart no one can take that from me

-Chris

From The Beat: Make sure you give a copy of this poem to your mom, and even more importantly, make sure you remember these words when you are next tempted to do wrong!

Growing up

Growing up in the hood is hard because you be around all your friends and family seeing a lot of horrible things. Then you get used to the things when you get older and you start doing the same things.

My big brother was coming in and out of jail for the same thing I am but now he's in San Quentin doing four years. But now I'm in jail trying to do my program so I can go home with my family.

-Db

From The Beat: Man learn from your big brother's mistakes. Don't go down the same path. If you get an opportunity to get your freedom back don't waste it by coming back. There's only so many chances you're gonna get in life so if you get one take advantage of it.

Ain' No Sense Stepping Out

What is it Beat its your carnal Smokey from Hayward, April 1st. Two and a half months to go, and then I'm free to be as I please. I'm going to get released on June 10, 2008. I told myself I would stop gangbanging, but it seems as though I'll lose my life faster getting out than stayin' in.

Plus once you step in the same ain't no sense stepping out I'm stuck in the game. I'ma keep it solid the game is in my blood I ain't finna let it go. In the game it's do or die, blood in blood out, and I'ma keep it lit.

-Smokey

From The Beat: Are there people you know who managed to at least dial down they're involvement with the streets, to the point where they could at least raise their families and get jobs of their own? Because the future you are looking at in this piece is pretty bleak.

Get Me A Business

What good it's Dauce. When I get out I'ma go to school. I'm also gonna try to get me a business started of some kind.

After I start my own business I'ma help my moms out the best I can if she want or need it and I'ma visit my folks after this group home stuff.

-Dauce

From The Beat: You can get a job, maybe ten or twenty hours a week, but right now don't you think your top priority should be school? That's one way you can guarantee yourself a good paying job in the future.

Close Friends

Now you layin' in my bed makin' love,
Baby girl I knew you were the One
My life grab my hand we gone take
This flight real real flight to the sky
Romancin' real nice... we're close friends.
I remember back when you loved me
I loved you and we were at peace
Now you sneak, Now you lie, and you
Even cheat...We're close friends.
Now look what you have done
You broke my heart, we fell apart
And you didn't get the crown
I know you like my style so I'ma put it
Down 'cause bare back makes you frown
Were close friends
Mow I'm locked in jail and I
Miss you and you miss me
And that makes me crazy I'm tired of
The dudes I'm tired of the girls I'm
Tired of the fake police ...we're close
Friends.
We're close friends

-Sydy-bo

From The Beat: Remember that when you become a famous singer, The Beat wants free tickets to all your Oakland shows!

And I can see now back then
I was blind
I was ignorant, dumb and never
spoke my mind

Addicted?

What's good with you Beat? Y'all know who this be, if y'all don't this your girl Ernestos wifey Melissa, from Hayward. Today I ain't feeling the topic that they giving me so yeah, but my PO is putting me in a drug treatment group home called Thunder Road. My PO thinks I'm addicted to pills and weed. Man I ain't no fiend. Man never been one, and never will be one. Straight up. T

They is talking about I'm gonna be leaving here within 2 weeks. And ill be doing 6-9 months in Thunder Road. But they said I cant have contact withv my baby daddy.

So that made me mad. The told me that the doors are never locked. Meaning its' easy to run from. I wanna run, but then I don't wanna come back here. The only reason I wanna run is because I wanna be able to be with my baby daddy Ernesto. But I hope he waits for me, as I will wait for him. But I don't wanna go to that place.

My probation officer is a cat. But to all my patnas in here in juvy, I love y'all much. To the staff Miss Lovdermilk, and Miss Williams thank you for the help you gave me, and Mrs. Chambers. To the Beat, thank you for my publication. To the Beat, y'all should start coming to Thunder Road. I like y'all program.

-Melissa

From The Beat: We'd love to come to Thunder Road, but in the meantime we sure hope you write to us from there, c/o The Beat Without. Even more importantly we hope you don't run. You have too much talent and heart to let yourself get sucked into this system. As for the drugs – look at it this way. You have done some things that hurt you or hurt other people when you were under the influence of drugs... that doesn't make you a "fiend" but maybe it means that there are some people at Thunder Road who might be able to help you lower the drama in your life, and take away some of the pain.

Growing Up

It's hard growing up in the 'hood. It's hard growing up in the 'hood. You got to grow up fast, and if you don't know, people get shot every day. So man, it's hard in the streets if you know how to raise a child.

I have a son and it changed my life from coming to juvenile hall. At two months, my son couldn't do too much, but he was holding his own bottle. Now he's five months.

I had warrant, and I called my baby mama up. My baby mama put the phone to my son's ears and I talked to him. He tries to talk back in baby words, mumbles.

I'm waiting for my PO to tell when I can go home.

-J Cran

From The Beat: Yes, it is hard to grow up, and in some circumstances, it's harder than it other circumstances. It's very hard to grow up without a father, so we hope, when you say your son has changed your life away from the hall, that you remember those words and keep that promise. When your PO tells you it's time to go home, what plans have you thought about so that you can stay with your son and not come back here? We're talking about real plans, step by step, because if you don't plan, you're just letting someone else plan your life for you, and nobody wants that. Good luck.

My Son Is My Reason

My son is my reason for not letting any of these females get me too upset.
My son is my reason that I want to get up in the morning.
My son is my reason for wanting to get up out this place.
My son is my reason for when I get out of here I'm going to do right.
My son is my reason for when I can't go on I do go on.
My son is my reason.

-Mim

From The Beat: Your son depends on and needs you even more than you depend on and need him. You did something that allowed you to be taken from his life, which means you weren't thinking about what is most important in your life. This piece tells us that you are thinking again. Don't stop!

What I Owe

I owe myself hella time because I play with my friends all day. I didn't go to school before. I go to rob and fight. And I never do my homework.

I owe my parents a lot of time, too. I didn't talk with them for a long time. I will try to get back these times when I get out.

-Tom

From The Beat: It sounds like you are saying you owe yourself what you are already giving yourself — time to do the things that lead you to this box! You will never get back the time you didn't spend with your parents because time is the one thing that we can never get back. So, think carefully about how you use the time that's coming.

Just Me

I would just like to be understood, not judged, about me and what's inside of me. I know people will have a lot to say, but nobody can judge me and my unborn child but God. So I take how I take it and the good also comes with the bad, and vice versa. I just want to be loved by everyone. Anyway, me and my baby are here to stay… so please respect it 'cause you ain't gone check it?

-Ne'nee

From The Beat: All we can add to this plea for love and respect is that we hope you are listening to your own prayer. Respect and love yourself, which means find a way to stay free. Your baby will need his mother with him, not writing sad poems from afar. Remember, it may only be God who can judge you, but the law gives that legal responsibility to people on earth, like DAs and judges, if you give them power over your life.

School Work

I work in school and they pay me minimum wage for going to school. The principal gives me just about ten dollars an hour just for going to school. 50-70 dollars a day, and the principal pay me every two weeks.

I do work in school and get straight A's since I was ten. But I made a mistake and brought some weed to school, and I lost my job in school.

-Peanut Ct

From The Beat: If you were getting straight A's, and you were getting $50-$70 a day, then you were even more foolish than we can say for losing it all over some weed! As for the last part of your piece, we took it out because, if any part of it is true, it can only put you deeper in the hole.

RIP Tavaures AKA T-Weez

Damn bruh! Wha's up with The Beat, mayne. I'm still holding it down up in here, mayne, but I'm kinda stressing. I found out that my homie Tweez died, and now it getting hard to breathe, bruh.

When I found out I didn't know, but one of my fellow detainees had an obituary and then I saw his face and my whole day turned into darkness I could not see anything. I started thinking that prior to me coming in here, I was with him not even a day in advance, and we was chillaxin', smoking a few blunts you know?

He kept telling me that he didn't wanna be a statistic, and I thought it was the 'dro talking, but he was really sincere. I feel that if I wasn't here, things would be very different.

RIP Weez (1990-2008).

-Yung Skippa

From The Beat: It makes us so sad to read these weekly pieces of loss, of death at such an early age, and for what? Tweez didn't want to become a statistic, but that is exactly what happened anyway. SO many of our young writers think that it can't happen to them, even when it happens to someone close. Has Weez's death made you think any differently about your own life, and how valuable it is? Are you consumed with thoughts of revenge, or thoughts of how to make some changes that will move you forward, let you live a long and free life, so that you can keep his memory alive for a long, long time?

Rewind

Aha! Yo', what's up with this editor, mayne. You tryna play me, mayne. I took offense to your response… Y'all should think before you write shhh! Oops! I slipped. I tried not to cuss, but I'm hot. I said "keep it movin'." How you know that something negative?

-Lil' Skippah

From The Beat: We're sorry we made you so angry, LS, and you may be right about "keep it movin'." But that's why we always tell you to write the details, to give the examples, and not to just put down clichés (like "keep it movin'). Maybe we both can do a better job…

Don't Get Locked Up

The way I am going to say this is you don't want to get locked up because you are in a room with three walls, and you are locked up in a room. I love my parents and family and I want to get out as soon as possible, please. When I get out I want two kids, a girl and a boy, a wife and pit bull. I will get a job and I would stay with her till I die and take care of my family, I love my parents with all my heart.

-Lon

From The Beat: We hope when you get out, you'll work on your issues, the things that led you here, before you start working on making a family. Get your education first, because only that way will you be able to take care of a wife and children.

S.F. NOTE TO U7:

From The Beat: In this issue, only five pieces got published from this unit. To be honest, even the ones we published aren't particularly good, but at least they said enough to get published. Seven pieces were cut because they were lazy toss-offs, and not worth our considerable effort. Unless you put in the effort, we won't. It takes too many of us working too many hours for too little pay to be rewarded with laziness and the lack of seriousness. When the youngest writers in The Beat are turning out better and longer and more thoughtful pieces than the oldest writers, something is wrong. It's time for y'all to step up to the plate!

Standing My Ground

Man, I hate how some cats try to clique up within themselves in here and really think they run this unit. In their heads they think they do, but in reality they don't run shhh! Man, I'm in here by myself, and I stand my own ground. I'ma ride my time out by myself.

-Angel

From The Beat: Okay, Angel, this barely made the cut because there is so much more you can say. (But we've cut so many pieces from this unit which said even less, that we have to have something to publish!) We want you to challenge yourself to the next level of writing. What does it mean to stand your own ground? Why do you think people clique up? Why do young people feel the need to prove they're in control? Why do you feel the need to prove they aren't? These are all questions to be examined, which would make a really good Beat piece.

Taking Care Of My Mom

Thinking back about school... When I get out of juvenile, I'ma go to school and try to go to college for my mom because my mom does everything for me. I want my mom to know that I love here a lot. I wanna take care of my mom and get a job, a good job, and take care her like she took care of me.

-Gordie

From The Beat: Of course your mom wants you to finish school and go to college because she knows how much better your life will be if you do. She doesn't want you to do it for her, she wants you to do it for yourself. But whether for her or for you, getting that education is the key.

I Need To Get Out

Man, I need to get the hell out of here. I'm tired of being in this damn place 'cause I've been here way too many times and need to get out and do some things to and with my girl, if you now what I mean. I also need to smoke a couple of blunts to ease my stress.

But I also need to get into school and get my high school diploma so I can move on with my life and go to college. I'm not sure which one in going to go to or what I'm going to study, but I want to go 'cause some of my homies been telling me that there be parties that be cracking and there, be some fine ass females there that ain't no dirty-ass hood rats, and the parties don't be having hella beef there and don't be getting shot up. But I need to get out and get some, and get a blunt or two too.

-Kizzer One

From The Beat: The sad truth is that as long as partying is all that's on your mind (from the blunts to the girls), you won't be making much forward movement with your life. Of course there are fine parties in college, but that's not the reason to go. There's a whole world of stuff you don't know anything about, and that's what college is there to expose you to. There's a reason that the Bible says: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." (Corinthians 13:11)

Growing Up

Growing up in the 'hood is tough thing to do, having to be around all the violence, drugs harassment from the police. It's that type of stuff that push youngstas towards jail, towards death, having to get out on a corner and sell drugs.

Like Black Bird said, we're the new generation and we can't plan to fail. And right now it's like the system got control of us and making us plan to fail. It's really youngsters out there dying over a block that they don't even own. So in that, success is the greatest revenge.

-Steve

From The Beat: You're right about everything. The system is not set up for you, it's set up for itself. It thrives when you fail. So, despite the hardships you are forced to endure on these mean streets, it's up to you not to give the system another body to buy and trade. It's up to you to make that plan for success so that when you succeed, you can have the last laugh.

A College Experience

I have a positive school experience. When I got to go to a college peer school out up San Francisco, I had to go on college trips, and other events. I did a oral presentation in front of 1200 people, and talked to other college admission colleges. What did I get out of it was to be responsible in life and stay positive always.

-Jordan

From The Beat: Did this experience make you want to go to college? And even before college, have you finished high school? You have to learn to crawl before you walk, and to walk before you run.

Have Hope

Growing up, you think that when you get arrested you would do it for a crime you committed. But life isn't always that way. People get prosecuted and get locked up even though you never committed a crime, and grow up in the system.

Well, stay up, and if you're innocent you will be free one day. Keep your head up.

-Angel

From The Beat: We wish you would tell us more about innocent people getting locked up. Is this based on your own case or on what you've observed? Adding details and examples is what makes a really good Beat piece. To keep it real, you will be free one day whether you're guilty or innocent, so what are your plans for when that day comes?

I'm Betta Now

What's up with The Beat? This yo' boy Davey-D up in the max unit holding it down. But yeah, I'ma tell you about an incident that happened years ago.

Well, when I was in my first year as a teen, I went through a lot of stuff back in the day. People tried to kill me for some money. Then I got on from the city and came back when I was 15. I started doing my thang, started getting this dough and hanging with the thugs on the block, getting my money.

Looking back to the way it used to 'cause I'm betta now.

-Davey-D

From The Beat: You'll quickly see that we took out one word from your title and your conclusion... Ask us if you don't know why. This piece is barely enough for a real Beat piece. It lacks explanation and examples. Come on, DD. Give us something more than this. We put a lot of work into making this magazine available and readable, so we want to see some effort on your part. You could write a much longer piece about that first experience when some people tried to kill you, for example. Were you afraid? How did you respond? How did you escape? Where did you go when you left the city? What is "your thang"? You see what we're talking about. Fill in the blanks!

Ready To Succeed

What it is? This Jomo up in here. I'm just up in here chillin', waitin' to get transferred again. Shhh man, I done been transferred three times already just 'cause my punk-ass attorney done messed a young brother up.

To all the mixed races incarcerated, y'all gotta keep ya heads up for real, for real. Seems like every time I come up in here, more than half the population is mixed race. It's real ugly up in here, man. Not 'cause it's hard, 'cause it really ain't. It's hard 'cause our attorneys, POs be playin' us for real. My attorney definitely did me dirty. Seems like they be settin' us up for failure.

I'm finna succeed though. That's the real thing that matters to me is to not fail.

-Jomo

From The Beat: We wish you would spend more time telling us about how you plan to succeed, what you're going to do not to fail, than all the time you tell us about how your lawyer and PO are playing you. Maybe they are, maybe they aren't, but when you write, "Every time I come up in here..." you're telling us that you are playing yourself. What will keep you from coming back again? Whatever it is, that's what you should be concentrating on because the system will not change.

Fight Back

I feel that we should fight back to what the governor is trying to do. Cutting billions from schools is absurd. That's going to make more poverty, and that means more crime, so we need to debate on the governor's decisions.

-Fed-Up Gloss

From The Beat: This is way too short, Fed-Up, but at least you took the topic seriously and said something serious. Let's hear what you would say in that debate with the Governor. Why should we fund more schools? Did you go to the school that is already built for you? If not, why not? Is it just schools that need public money, or could the taxes that we pay go for other projects that could benefit the people? Like what? What's the connection between education (or the absence of education) and poverty and crime? These are questions we wish you would examine in detail, and not just toss off a three-sentence piece that barely describes the surface.

DeAndre

To my son DeAndre, I know it's hard to be without your mom. As hard as it is for you, I feel the same way. No matter what happen to me, you will always be in heart. I think about you every night before I go to sleep. I thought when I had you it would slow me down but I guess I just wasn't ready.

Now that I'm go be gone for these 12 to 18 months. I see I really messed up. I'm gone miss the first year of your life. I just want you to know that your mom loves you.

-Your Mom

From The Beat: We believe every word of love in this heartfelt letter to your son. And we hope that owning up to the fact that you weren't ready to be a mom is a way of getting yourself ready. Because that's the most important job in the word. You're wrong about just one thing, though. It isn't as hard for you as it is for him. Never again forget that now your first and last responsibility is to be the mother that you wanted to be.

Loyal To My Friends And Family

I'm loyal to many. I'm loyal to my family and friends. Everybody respect me, even people I don't know. We're loyal to each other. The reason I say this is because you have to be loyal to get respect and loyalty back from one another...

-Nunu

From The Beat: We agree that you have to give what you expect to get. But what does loyalty really mean? Can you be loyal to your family but continue to do the things that give the system power to take you from them?

Grown Man With Grown Plans

Yo. Yo. Yo/ What's up with The Beat? Me, I'm still in this hellhole waitin' to touch down and get up out this place. Growin' up, I stayed around the old ninjas. That's why I think I'm so smooth with it. I didn't grow up like an average young ninja. I done been through a lot.

Now here I stand,
A grown-ass man
A young ninja with some grown-ass plans
Don't point fingers... You don't know that man

-B Boy

From The Beat: We sure wish you had shared some of those grown man's plans with us. Where do you hope those plans will take you? Are they real plans, or just wishes and hopes (there's a difference)? When you do touch down, what will be different so that you never touch back?

I Owe Myself

I think I owe myself a chance to finish high school. Also I think that if I gave myself a chance to do that, it would give me a better chance at life. If I finish high school, I would go to college and try to play football for Cal State. First, I need to get out of here so I can get back into school.

I also owe myself a chance to succeed in life. To do that I need to stop getting' caught up. Sometimes I think that I can do better, but if I'm in here, I can't do that.

So this end my part in The Beat Within.

-Korff

From The Bet: Besides playing football at Cal State, what would like to study there? What kind of work would you like to do once you finish your schooling? We believe that your goal of finishing high school in order to go on to college is, indeed, the key to your success. You owe yourself nothing less.

Mystery Woman

Mystery woman
She is fascinating, gorgeous, spontaneous, beautiful.
She has these eyes that could just capture you.
Her smile is so right, not too big, not too small, just right.
She got some straight pretty white teeth. Body in good shape.
She got a great personality. Hershey Kiss skin, smooth.
She amazing. I wish she could be mine.

-Jarome

From The Beat: You've described a beautiful mystery woman, but only her surface. What do you know about the heart that beats inside that beautiful body, or the brain behind those captivating eyes?

I Will Always Remember You

What's up with The Beat? It me, Grimy, reppin' my 'hood.

What I got to say today is I will always remember my ninja Chino. Today is his anniversary. My ninja died two years ago, and today will be the second year. But I'm here instead of being on the block with all the homies. But in my heart, you still with us, Homie.

RIP Chino. We will never forget you. Crack them Hen open for us Homie, with no chaser. (07/04/84 – 03/25/06).

-Grimy

From The Beat: As we've said before — and, tragically, as we will certainly have to say again — we are sorry that any child has to pay the ultimate price for the Game, and the games y'all play. It's not right, and it's not natural. It certainly is not part of any plan that any god might have created. You're reppin' a street — an uncaring, cold piece of concrete that is owned by other people and that doesn't care if you are there or not. And for that, you're willing to die? Damn!

I Need A Boy

Chorus
I need a boy and he gotta be right
Golden brown skin glowing harder than light
The type of boy I can make my hubbie with the good looks that would have you looking like
Verse
I need a boy I can call my boo
When I say I love, he say, "Babe I love you too"
When we began our first date man we had to take it slow
There's a lot of hatin' man, that's just how it goes
Man, had the boy; man, he be dropping bombs
Took me to his house just to meet his dad and moms
Every time I got a question, they stop first to say hi
Or look back at him and he just caught my eye
I guess I was good 'cause I ain't fake
People say I acted fake but they like to hate
And the ones that do hate is way too late
Y'all on the first piece he already ate the cake.
Chorus
I need a boy and he gotta be right
Glowing brown skin glowing harder than light
The type of boy I can make my hubbie with the good looks that would have you looking like
Verse
I need a boy looking just like a hood model
Body shape right, tight like a coke bottle
Man, I'm only fifteen but I'm on that grown shhh
I want a boy that's too cute for the streets
And boy who got a scraper with mahogany seats
I'm like Tinkerbell, I keeps it moving
My game so tight I can have a love reaction
And when I spit the truth I'm like the main attraction
I will have you and your best friend tryna buy tickets to see me
All the tricks trying hard to be me
But check this out, I'll keep it real with you
I'll take you shopping but I wont spend a million on you

-Nique Bezzy

From The Beat: You're after a boy whose looks must be pretty/But what about inside, is he dull or is he witty/If all that's important is this boy's appearance/You'll get what you pay for, like buying at clearance/It's time to look deeper, at the heart and the soul/Because shallow relationships take quite a toll

Thuggin' Paradise, Weez

Just today Weez I found out you passed away
My brahbrahs is dead from that hot lead
Damn! Why they have to pull the trigga on my ninja
Forever you gone be a boss, a gangsta figga
No doubt bra you can trust in me
As soon as I get out I'm busit your grave with purp and Hennessey
I know you looking down on your young sis
I'ma keep your name alive and you know this!
This ain't a sad poem, I did all my crying
Beefing is flying and the streets is lying
Forever you'll be in my heart
Death ain't gone keep us apart
In loving memories of Weez

-Giggles

From The Beat: Do you believe in a God, a Supreme Creator?/Cause you talk about Paradise, but still sound like a hater/Did the same God that made you and Weez/Also make those that you threaten, your "enemies"?/If He made everything, then all of your hatin'/Is just a way to spit on what He's creatin'?/We respect life too much to let your threats stand/We'll never allow them, no matter how grand/RIP Weez, and so many more/Children killing children on both sides of the door/How many more must pay with their all/Until there's none of you left, until all of you fall?

What I Owe Myself

What' sup with The Beat? What do I think I owe myself? A second chance to do right and get my life together. Make my family happy. Make myself happy. Get out, smoke a blunt with my ninjas, go to school, stay out of trouble, and try to be an electrician or something.

-Lano

From The Beat: You definitely owe all these things to yourself and to your family. Don't let smoking that blunt with the homies get in the way of the other goals, because that's too easy to happen. What's your plan for becoming an electrician? That's a good profession. Go for it!

Stop Coming Back

Stop coming back to weak-ass YGC. Tired of being here. Came here four times and don't wanna come back any more. I'm do my best to stay out. What that means that I'ma start going to school, do my group home programs, don't run.

-Michael

From The Beat: Even though these are simple steps to follow (school, group home program, don't run), it is a real plan, and that is exactly what you need so that you don't come back a fifth time, and then a sixth, etc. Stop now, while you can.

A Positive School Experience

One time I was at school and we were playing a game of volleyball. We were having the greatest match. My team was winning by two, and the teacher just ended the game. We all yelled at the teacher and he got mad at us because we were into the game. So, because we yelled at him, he gave us all failing grades.

-K

From The Beat: What do you mean he gave you failing grades? We don't know how long ago this was, but the teacher had no right to fail anyone for what you did or did not do on the volleyball court. Any teacher who does that should be challenged by going to the principal and making a complaint. (Of course, yelling at the teacher is never a smart thing to do...)

My Locked Up Love...

Wasted days and wasted nights
Just another chapter in my crazy life
Tattoo tears keep you handcuffed to my heart
Our firm memories always creeping in my dreams
Fate played a dirty trick or so it seems
Like a bullet to a gun or a puppet to its strings
Mi Corazon only has eyes for you
In the mist of our world
Where youngsters sing cemetery tunes
And eternal whispers of shadows
Haunt the calles a cholo calls home
A blackened rose came to life
Like once a dull sharpened knife
And gave birth to a love so bright
It could light even the darkest night
Addicting like the smoke of a glass pipe
Perfect like the eyes of a snake
Never to blink never to cry
Down for me like I'm down for you
That's why we ride side by side
Till this life is through

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Riding for each other right into this cage/When will you ever grow out of this stage/What does love mean if it's so easy to abandon/Taking orders from strangers when on your own feet you should be standin'/Words of love, so easy to say/But how real can they be when you have feet of clay?/Don't let your life be memories alone/Get out, create new ones, and stand on your own!

Satan's Daughter

Evil mentality, peeps lying to me
Keep yo' wolf money 'cause you ain't buying me
It seems evil is the only one riding with me
Evil thoughts keep fighting with me
Go ahead and punish me for my evil sins
'Cause I can't control what's within
To the eyes of the world, I'm just another screw up
Just 'cause I'm rough up they think I'ma get knocked up
Call me crazy or call me insane
'Cause I'm quick to cause you pain
Evil plans control me don't matter if I'm in the outs or a cell
My soul is suffering feel like I'm already in hell
It's normal, spirits around me so formal
There's no cure for this disease so ninjas call me abnormal
Satan is my homie, satan is my nigs
I'm called his daughter aka gigs

-Giggles

From The Beat: Once again, we had to alter one of your lines as not appropriate for The Beat. (We won't let you use our pages to make threats that sound like they're coming out of the mouth of a child!) You have so much going on inside, why not use it for something better? You say it doesn't matter if you're on the outs or in a cell, but you don't know what those cells the system has waiting for you up ahead are truly like, so don't be such a willing slave! Do we sound angry? We are! It always makes us angry to see such intelligence and potential wasted in foolishness that somebody else has handed to you, and which you've just accepted as unchangeable. We don't call you crazy or insane, just someone who thinks of herself as a leader, but is, in fact, following a path laid down by others and leading to a life surrounded by other females confined forever!

51-50

What's poppin' with my dawgs from The Beat? Me, man it's the same ol' shhh fa' real on this side. I'm still going 51-50 in this grimy hole, ya heard me. All the way retarded on my PO. He keep tryna wash me, no detergent.

They got my dawgs in here for some ol' other shhh that they don't got proof on. Let my ninjas out, you crackers. Y'all going on that he say, she say shhh, but I got a feeling somebody around this camp eating that cheese.

Man, I'm signing out this Beat, ya heard me. This that young dunnie IGGs checking out. Aye, y'all better stop talking shhh when y'all respond to my beat.

-Iggus

From The Beat: Shhh is like beauty and art — it's in the eye of the beholder. We respond to what we read, and when we read what we think is shallow thinking, that's how we call it. And that's how we call this! If you think telling the system to let your homies out is going to do the trick, then just keep yelling about it. But don't expect that will change anything. If you keep experiencing the "same ol' shhh" then you'd better change things up. If not, expect a lot more of it! (Finally, disrespecting The Beat by using our pages to threaten anyone is a no-no, and no matter how often you give it a try, we'll always take it out.)

Edit That Thang Right

Ha ha! What's up? This going straight to the editor. I advise you to go find a thesaurus or something 'cause you on some other shhh. I don't know if that editor spot getting to your head, but ninjas don't need all the smart shhh you talking 'bout. And spell my name right.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: Well, as you can see, this editor again took out your middle initial (and will continue to do so), so you can stop complaining about that one. It won't change. But let's see if we've got your message straight: you're locked up (again), but you don't need all that "smart shhh" we try to spit in your direction. We can't agree, but then again, if we're wrong about that, what do you need to stop volunteering to be the system's slave? (The other piece you submitted, which we cut out entirely, suggests that the way you're currently thinking is a prescription for a lot more self-inflicted slavery.)

What Do I Owe Myself

I owe myself life. I have let it been taken from me time and time again. People blame other people for being here, but not me. I am responsible for every problem that has gotten me here. I just wish I cared more of myself not to come back. I just want to give my child more than I have ever given myself.

-Ne'nee

From The Beat: You're thinking is exactly right, Ne'nee. Yes, you must give your child more than you have given yourself because your child will be a very big part of yourself. From now forward, all of your priorities must change from what you like to do to what you know you must do. We know you have it in you to be a wonderful, responsible mother.

Growing Up

What up Beat? This ya boy London. They say that it takes a village to raise a child. I don't believe that is true because I raised myself from six years old to the age of 16. It wasn't hard to raise myself even though I sold dope ten years of my life, and I been locked up five years of my life. And when times did get hard I prayed to God and He help through some of the hard times...

-London

From The Beat: Even though we believe you did the best you could, you were still a child unable to do what a caring, responsible adult should have been doing. You say it "wasn't hard," but you've given away almost one-third of your entire life to this cold system of lock-ups. No one who has been a real parent could ever agree with you that "it wasn't hard." Raising children is the hardest and most important job any of us could ever do. We're sorry you've been put in this position that no child should ever be put in. The ways you've managed to care for yourself represent the failure of all of us. The "village" has failed you!

RIP Dukes

What's good with The Beat? This that ninja Na-Na writin' about my ninja dukes. Man, rah, I don't know where to start. He was my ninja fo' real. I love my ninja an' miss him so much. He got killed February 2008 on some bullshhh.

He was like the realest ninja on the block. And Dukes, I miss you hella much bra. We all we got.

-Na-Na

From The Beat: Even though we are leaving in the coded nonsense at the end (you are far from all you got, and, as in this tragedy, sometimes you haven't even got yourselves), we still had to take out one line. We hate reading these weekly reminders that some consequences are forever, and that no design of nature or God could include the wanton killing of our youth. This is a disease with no end in sight. Neither those dying of the disease (you, your homies, your "enemies") or those most responsible for curing it (us, the larger society, the government) appear to care enough to bring this epidemic to a close. We are sorry for your loss.

Another Rap For The Beat

I'm tired of being locked up wearing other people's clothes
The food taste nasty
The phone is broken I stay provoking and keep on flowing
I keep my raps written down on paper
I'ma keep on yoking up in my whip
Until I get my chips
I'm up in my car hella choking
My whole damn car be hella smoking
You know me man I be puffin'
Don't even roll it up if you can't even hang.

-P-Nut

From The Beat: It's just another rap/ and the way you be talking sound like you fa sho' you coming back/ Yet you complain about the clothes, and you complain about the food/ Then why don't you stop doing all that hot shhh dude/ I guess it's not any of our business, but we're just a little concerned/ If you don't learn things the easy way then through the hard way you might learn.

Right To Learn

What's up, Beat? Well, I'm just in here in this same Max unit. But anyways, something right to learn is a good thing in your life because people can make their life. And people can graduate high school, get diploma, and then go to college, then find a good jobs.

That's how my mother wants me to do the same, but I'm trying my best to do that for my mother so I can make her happy and my other families.

Well, that's all I got to say. Maybe I'll see you later Beats. Stay up

-Pablo C

From The Beat: When you were on the outs, did you go to school? Every day? Why or why not? Do you think getting your education will make only your mom happy only? What about you? How would finishing school make you happy?

I'll Be Back

When I get out I'm going to follow my court's decision to go to school. I'm gonna still smoke and drink but still be making my money. Forget it who I'm kidding I'm, probably going to be back in two weeks.

-Orlando

From The Beat: Wow, you have so much faith in yourself that you're saying you're gonna be back in two weeks. What kind of life are you trying to live? Do you like wearing the next man's draws? Do you like eating county food? Do you like showering with other dudes?

I Was Lied Too

I thought I was going to breath fresh air soon. They lied to me. They want to put me in an alternative in Pennsylvania called Glen Mills.

That would put me as one of the youngest kids there. I don't want to go so far away. I have already neglected my family enough by doing stupid shhh. I owe it to them to try to go home and do the best I can. I'm too confused to function now.

-A very young teen

From The Beat: We understand how you're feeling right now. You made a few mistakes and now you regret it. And now you have to pay the price, and face the consequences for your actions. Check it though. You have the opportunity to learn from this mistake so you won't go back out there on the street doing more stupid shhh. That way you won't come back to facilities like these. 'Cause after juvenile is county jail, and the pen and so forth. Those are places where you don't want to be living at. So do your program now so and learn everything that you can. You will be back with your family soon and when you do don't take them for granted like you were doing.

What Do I Owe Myself

I owe myself respect because I disrespected my body by drinking and using drug and putting tattoos on me. All that affected my body for the future.

-U.R.

From The Beat: This is only the beginning of a piece, U.R. In what ways have your tattoos affected your future body? What and where are those tattoos and what is the story behind them? Why did you use drugs, and what will their effects be in the long run? These are all questions we wish you had thought about and tried to answer, because in those thoughts and answers are a great Beat piece.

Looking Down At My Funeral

I already see my funeral and how I am going to die
I already miss blazing up so let's get high
One more time before I'm laid to rest
I don't wont to be the one to run when my times come
I'm the one who chose this gangster life
I never thought twice
I'm down for my shhh, cuete (gun) in my levis
Dressed in black it ain't nice
With tears in my mom's eyes
For me to be praying
Every one I love looks mad so what am I saying
It's not like God didn't know I was living
I just want to be forgiving so stop tripping
Homies if you hear me walk away from this hug
Your carnales give your hefa a kiss I don't blame you
for screwing up on the drogas(drugs)
It was just my vida loca.

-G

From The Beat: This is a sad piece for us to hear. You already see your funeral? You don't plan on living too long? You don't wanna live long? You don't like your life that much? Why? Aim high!! Reach for dreams. Talk to a trusting adult/counselor!

Life Before

I think life before cell phones was pretty hard. Well, the reason I think is because I'm used to cell phones. My time in this world is all about technology and I'm all about that. When I was out I had a cell phone and I'm always using it so yeah, I'm used to it. I need my celly when I get out. Alright Beat, that's my opinion on this, I'm out…

-R

From The Beat: We think most people in our society have become dependent on their cell phones and now we all wonder, how could we ever get along without them? Do you think that beyond faster communication, cell phones and text messaging have changed the way people interact? Do we have more superficial conversations now that we talk more, or are they deeper because we have more time to talk?

Who Am I? That's The Question

I am a just another juvenile in the system. I wish I wasn't but I am. I've been in the system since I was ten. This is my reality I've been here four times and now going to the ranch. I don't know if I'm going to complete the program but I'm going to try.

I don't know if I'm going to run or stay that's the question I've been asking myself. I wish I wasn't doing this program but I am and I can't change it. Well I'm out stay up ya'll, late.

-Little Pants

From The Beat: You are a bright young man that's just a little confused that's all. You've been in the system for quite a while but that doesn't mean that you can't get out the system. Don't run from your program, because that means that you're gonna have to keep running and hiding and constantly keep looking over your shoulder. If you stay and complete your program it'll be a big stepping stone so you can get out the system and move on with your life.

Cisco And A.P.A

What's up Beat and Beat reader? This is Cisco from the best unit in the hall. It's cool. It's not even locked down. We get hella activity. It's been pretty cool in here.

Well, I'ma write about when I used to go to A.P.A. That school was whack. It was from 8 to 5 all day. When I used to go there, I didn't learn nothing. I went to school for like five months out of twelve months that you're suppose to complete.

I stopped going because the teachers didn't really teach. They didn't really care. Plus, they were too busy tryna to keep the immature kids in check. That got me mad because I was getting forced to go by court and I was planning to go to school to educate myself but ended up not getting what I was going for. So I stopped going for like three weeks, and I was about to get failed. But I ended up catchin' this charge: "Assault with a firearm".

Maybe if that school paid more attention on trying to educate instead of trying to fail people, it would be better. I told my PO my reason why I stopped going, but she didn't really care. All she was thinking of what my recommendation is in my fitness trial. I found out what her recommendation for court is: she recommends I be tried as an adult. But I ain't trippin' 'cause I beat my case hopefully. Well I'ma let you go. Late!

-Cisco

From The Beat: You know, Cisco, there are some very good observations here, if you would just expand on them. We wonder why you had to go to APA to begin with. We can see that someone — some teacher — taught you to write very well, so what happened after that? As far as catching an assault case, we can't accept the connection you seem to want to make between teachers who didn't care and your own actions outside of school. We hope you don't get tried as an adult (because you aren't one), and we hope you beat your case. But most important of all, for now and the future, we hope that you begin to take responsibility for your own decisions and choices, and not find others to point the finger at. Teachers are responsible for educating you. If they don't, it's their failure. You are responsible for acting within the law and going to school. If you don't, it's your failure.

Growing Up Is Hard

I had to grow up a lot more recently because I've been kinda homeless for two years. I was sleeping at Motel 6 for hella long. The worst was at the tweaker house, can't wait till my mom comes to tell me she got a place.

Then I'll be getting out on house arrest and a year of APA if not I'm out to the ranch and my whole mentality changes. Until then I hope the best because I want to see my brother.

-Pee-Wee

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that you were homeless. But you have a strong spirit and mind and hopefully your mom does come through. You do need to stay away from tweakers and any negative environment. In maturing, you need to recognize that you have to be more responsible, and more careful with the decisions you make. Cause being locked up ain't gonna help your situation at all.

What Do I Owe Myself

I owe myself a new life because I'm tired of being locked up and wearing other people clothes. And also being locked in this cage like an animal. When I really need to be on the outs taking care of my family especially my great grandma.

Also so I can get back in school and graduate so I can be a good role model for my lil' brother Santos. I love my lil' bro.

-P-Nut

From The Beat: You're right you owe yourself all those things you just mentioned and much more. We're glad that you have realized that. Now it's time to put that plan into action. Good luck, stay away from negativity and we truly hope you believe in yourself cause we do.

A Drunk's Dream

Well today topic Is "what do I owe myself?" I owe myself a vacation with a load of beer. Coronas, Tecate, and especially Negra Modelo . Just kick back with no worries just enjoy life.

-Ja

From The Beat: When all you can dream about is beer (four different kinds), how long do you think it would be until that dream turns into a nightmare? Sober up!

Untitled

I was currently going to independence high school up in San Jose and things weren't going so good there because I would hardly go to school. That's because my teachers weren't that helpful, they honestly would not care if I would show up, so that would make it easier for me not to show up.

As a result the cops and the advisers would suspend me for no reasons, like walking around campus or being tardy. Now that I'm in the hall I do get along with my teacher and even when I'm not in the mood of getting up I still get up and go. Because I want to do good and get out and return to my moms and my baby's mama Alejandra and my daughter Alexi,s but even when I get out I'm going to keep going to school.

Stay good Beat. Later…

-Gato Madre

From The Beat: It should not take incarceration for you to understand that no one cares if you fail in life. People have too many problems and concerns of their own to try to live both you and their lives. If you need an excuse not to do something that's because you didn't want to do it in the first place.

A Set Up?

Even though it's my fault that I'm in here I think the system sets juveniles up to come back so that they can get their pay-check. Like when they set the outs curfew at like 8 o'clock they already know that most of the kids that get locked up and come out, that they won't be home at 8 o'clock so when they get out past 8 o'clock they get picked up by the cops and get locked up.

-Mumbles

From The Beat: You make a good observation about the flaws in the system. When we look at how they set up the punishment system it makes us wonder, are they more focused on helping you guys make a better life or keeping you guys locked away?

A Solid Ninja

Not too many ninjas out there are solid. But I got a solid ninja. One day me and my ninjas were walking around EPA and we needed money. We saw a group of people playing soccer and their pants were laying on the grass. So I snatched a pair of pants and we all ran. We split up and 30 minutes later I saw someone in the back of a police car.

Later that day I found out that it was my ninja bar who was in the police car and they arrested him for something I did. He could have told the police my name and all my information but instead he kept it solid and took the blame. I respect him for that and that's what I call a solid ninja.

-Lionel

From The Beat: That's messed up that you let your boy take the blame for it though. We understand the not snitching policy but why would you let your boy take the blame if you really was the one that did it? You're not being solid to your boy. Why don't you be a real solid ninja to your boy and take the blame so he don't have to be sitting in jail cause of you.

Disappointment

What's cracking Beat? Today's topic is about disappointment.

I disappointed a lot of people in the past until this day, getting kicked out of school and getting locked up was the biggest.

My mom and dad are always mad at me, but they try not to think about all the problems. I disappointed myself a lot of different ways. My thoughts need to change cuz thoughts turn into actions. No one's perfect, there's ups and downs. "Forgive but don't forget" I say to myself everyday.

-Elie

From The Beat: Many people realize when they've disappointed other people, but it takes an insightful person to realize when they've let themselves down. Although it hurts to disappoint yourself, it does means that you have high expectations for yourself. What are these expectations? Which ones did you fail to meet? When you start feeling proud of yourself, other people will do the same.

Who's Driving

Today I am goin' to write about fits or the varrio. Well as they are written together they can go together without no problems. Well it would be nice to have a good-lookin' car on 20inch rims, but it's not the car it's the rider of the car and where he is from because the driver can be a punk and have a nice car but if they know who he is no one will care about his car but if he is well-known he will get first pick and will not have to worry about anything.

Havin' good so called fits in the varrio would be coo because the little homies would be lookin' up to you as I once did when I was out there chillaxin' in the streets. Well this is it for my story 'till next time am out.

-Rascal

From The Beat: You make a good point here. More emphasis should be put on the person who owns these things, rather than the things themselves. We live in a pretty materialistic society and sometimes we forget about important things like personality, integrity, and honesty. Thanks for reminding us.

Owe Myself

I owe myself a lot of stuff like getting all the time I waited when I was locked up, time with my family, and with my ladies well I'm out.

-Nino

From The Beat: You don't owe yourself anytime at all. You put yourself in the position that you're in right now. If anything you owe yourself your freedom and keeping it that way.

Craving Snacks

Hey yo mi Pablo let me get a bean burrito and some hot Cheetos with a hint of lime.

-Growling Stomach

From The Beat: How do you control these cravings when you are inside the halls?

Schools

All the schools I been to and that's a lot of them, the teachers and cops always harassed me and followed me because of the way I looked and dressed. The schools could of supported me and my homeboys instead of trying to find ways to get me kicked out.

-Jason

From The Beat: It's this thing called stereo type that's taking advantage of fragile minds and is having them perceive the world through a halo effect. When people think foolish about you you let your actions be the knowledge that bring their ignorance guilt.

Freedom

I got so lucky for another chances of freedom to go to A.P.A. If I screw this up I will end up in camp for 6-8 months. So I need to stay away from drugs. Well see you on the outs. Late Beat Within.

-Juan

From The Beat: Stay away from drugs young homie you're too young to be ruining your life like that. Being on drugs is only gonna lead you into making bad decisions and possibly landing you back in jail. If you care about your freedom or your life at all you'll stop using drugs.

Moving On

Well, what up all of you reading this linias it gots to be Psycho coming out of San Jose. Well, I'm just posted here thinking about how I'm not gonna came back here because this is not the place for me to be at. I realized that I've lost my whole childhood and teenage life.

I've been locked up most of my teenage years. I'm tired of this place. I'm hoping that I never have to come back. Well I know I'm not coming back here. My next step is county jail, Elmwood, or the pen! Forget that, I'm not trying to go there, if I do then I do.

Well, gots to go. Much love and respect.

- Psycho

From The Beat: We know that sometimes difficult circumstances can make us feel like we've lost out on a certain part of our lives, but trust us, you still have plenty of time to make your life what you want it to be and maybe relive some of those experiences you've missed out on. What are some of the first things you want to make up for when you get out? Hopefully there's more to life than being a homeboy!

A Positive School Experience

Last year was a good school year. Up until the end of the year I was good. I liked the school because they treated everyone like family because due to its small population.

In addition, if we did good Mondays- Thursdays we would always have BB-Q's on Fridays which were cool. Furthermore, the teachers were great! So that was good until I got off house arrest and started using drugs again and staying out all night. Then finally one day we got pulled over and the police found drugs on me and took me in here.

Now I'm back in here. And now I'm back in here for truancy and doing for months. Well Beats, its time to take it down so I'm out.

-Gray

From The Beat: It the simple memories like the positive school memory that keep you out every time you think of the happiness it brought to your life. You'll start associating your self more and more around positive people when you finally come to realize that this is where your happiness lies.

Never Dropping Out of School

Dropping out of school never crossed my mind.

Don't understand how people ain't smart enough to strive then to quit.

To me, I strive because I want to end up with a life with a good home and a good job,

instead of struggling without a job and homeless.

What people don't realize is without a diploma or a GED, you won't have a good easy life, instead of making it harder than is already is. Well, that's all I gots to say.

-Fly Palmero

From The Beat: Such good advice! We believe you have to keep your eyes on the long term goals, house and good job, in order to get through the every day challenges of school and staying out of trouble. Do you have any other ways that you keep yourself motivated? Most people think about dropping out at least once in a while, so it's impressive that it never crossed your mind. Keep up whatever you're doing.

Droppin Out

Let me tell you something about dropping out. I dropped out 7th grade 'cause it was hard at the beginning of 6th grade. I got in my first fight on that day.

I fell in love with fighting. Ever since dat day I started fightin more at school and the streets. I had to find out myself that fighting was goin nowhere. But every school I went to I fought and got kicked out.

Ever since 7th grade I haven't been back to a public school. I need to get my diploma and get my mind straight. But don't get me wrong, my cousin is always gonna stay by my side by any means. "Winners never quit, quitters never win."

-Ezie

From The Beat: It's so important to have someone that will stick with you through the good and bad, we're glad you have that support. Tell your cousin about your dream of graduating and if he really has your back, he'll help you see it through. Now that you recognize the difficult effects of your fighting at school, can you use this knowledge to pick a different path?

I Owe Myself

I owe myself some schooling and a job when I get out. I owe it to myself to better my life.

-Wake up

From The Beat: We believe you do and we believe in you.

To Improve

The one thing I want in school is to get my grades up. If I could I'll go back and stop doing drugs, go to school more and get an education. I would stop hanging around the wrong group.

-Chris

From The Beat: What is it that's stopping you? Is it anything in the Beat's power to make your want become a reality?

Owing Myself A Lot

What I owe myself? Let me see... I think I owe myself a lot. One thing is freedom. Like wearing my own draws socks, pants, and shirts because I don't want to be wearing other ninjas dirty shhh, ya feel? Another thing I owe myself is to be a good son to my mom because she deserves more than I give her. Late.

-Darryl

From The Beat: You have told us a lot with just these few sentences. And you're right you deserve owe yourself your freedom and a better life. You also do need to be a good son to the mother who loves you and gave birth to you. When you get out do what you need to do to give yourself that freedom, and once you get it don't lose it.

The System Needs to Change

Let me tell you Beat, the system needs to change. The system is kind of harsh now-a-days. Us youngsters do stupid shhh here and there, but we ain't that bad. We just need to find the right route and figure out what we want to do in our lives. We might move slow, but we're getting there. So, this is for the system, "kick back and rest your necks!" And what I mean is that the system is getting us just for petty crimes. Nobody is perfect, so you just can't lock us up every time. Give us a chance and help us find out route.

-Wise Guy

From The Beat: You're totally right, the system should be sure to give you at least as much, if not more, support than punishment. It makes us wonder whether their ultimate goal is to help you or keep you locked up. So, how are you finding your "right route?" Where do you think it will lead?

Dukes

What up and cracking Beaters? This be Silent from San Jose. Hopefully everybody reading this is doing firme. Pues, I'm going to keep my mente strong and not come back here. Other than that everything else is going well.

I also want to thank The Beat for coming here and making this happen for us. I'm going to cut this short and I'm out.

-Silent

From The Beat: Not coming back is a great idea, good luck. Thanks for the appreciation, we love what we do and hearing what you all have to say.

Dear Alicia

You were the best roommate I ever had. I miss you already and you're just sitting on the other side of the room. I'm writing this to let you know so that you know even though I'm gone you are still in my prayers. I hope everything works out for you. I loved all the nights we stay up late talking about anything and everything getting into trouble for talking too loud. Ha ha. You better keep your head up and no matter now much stuff people talk, never change that laugh. That's probably what I'll miss the most about you. This time is only temporary and it'll make you stronger. Don't let any guy bring you down. You can still be in love but take care of you and your business and miss me! I love you.

-Alexandria

From The Beat: Friendships that develop under such trying circumstances can be like a little gift. Here's to you both keeping strong bonds on the outs.

The Day I Quit My Job

I had the best job anybody can ask for, but one day that I was drunk and under the influence of drugs. I lost that job just because my friends were more important at that time. 'Cause of the drugs I learned a good lesson, friends make you lose a lot of things, your family or your freedom (think about it, life is really short).

-Psycho

From The Beat: It's true that our peer group influences a lot of what we do. Do you think there's a way to keep your friends a priority, but still stay real to what you want and need?

Coming Back/Never Coming Back

What up Beat. Well, it's yo boy Pw from San Jose. Well, tonight's topic is about coming back/ never coming back.

Well, to start off with is that it is hard to get out of the system because if you are gang-banging you will come back at least one or two times or other people may have come back more than one or two times, and I think that the system is to make you come back because that's how the people that work in the jail make money. The first time that I was here I said that I was never gonna come back, but I guess I came back for a violation. Well, that sucks because they're just taking all your money. The thing that it takes to be successful and to stay free is to go out and just stay away from the streets for a while and to not get caught up for something stupid again.

Well Beat, that's all I got to say, well, stay up and see you next week, ok, late.

-Pw

From The Beat: Good thoughts here. We agree with both your points: the system is far from perfect and it doesn't seem right that people make money off of other people's hardship. Also, it's a good observation that staying free is the first step to be successful. How can you take steps to make your life better if you're locked up? How are you going to stay free? And what first steps will you take to enhance your success?

Thinking at Night

As the day turns into night
So I count the days that I got left
I am thinking I got it seat
I start counting and I got twelve
Thanking the Lord for another day with health
So I am laying in my bed
Lots of things I got in my bed
But there's nothing that I can say
I am just waiting for my day
I gotta get me a girl this time
You know some that I can call her mine
I don't want a girl that has been sean
Do you know what I mean
Not some girl that kicks it in the hood
Knowing that I am thinking she's no good
I need a girl who knows how to cook food
I'm happy to say this is my last time in The Beat
So let me take a seat
'Cause standing up is hurting my feets
No more writing on this sheet to you Beat
I gots to say something but don't get mad
I feel kind of sad
I feel like I might come back
Or have my fan dress in black
I am scared but I am fast to change and to care
You don't need to say "I dare"
'Cause I'll straight jump off the stair
And I'll say where, where
Well, Beat, this is something that I needed to share

-P

From The Beat: You've shared some honest thoughts with us in this poem and showed us a piece of your mind as you prepare to leave the hall. Feeling a little nervous about whether or not you'll come back is totally normal, just remember it's in your hands. We all think up fantasies and worries in our heads at night. What do yours tell you about your true feelings, anxieties, hopes, and goals?

What I'm thinking

Well, what's crackin' Beat Machine. Me just chillin'. Well I am kinda bored, just trying to kill time so that way I could be ready to go out there and do my thing.

Well I talked to my cousin yesterday and that was fun. I haven't talked to him for three months.

Well, to all, I could say is try to stay out of trouble. You can't be getting in fights in here and you can't afford to go to Y.. All I could say is don't be stupid keep your head up and hope you get out of hall. Good luck.

Shorty

From The Beat: You give good advice about staying out of trouble and remembering our responsibilities for everyone reading this. What responsibilities do you have on your plate? What might a friend say to you?

Double Life

What up Beat it's your boy M from San Jose, but I live a double life.
When I'm with my parents I don't get into trouble but when I'm with my neighborhood I'm a total different person.
I don't think if I was to hang out with the homies so much I wouldn't be in trouble.
Well, that's all I can say about a double life.

-M

From The Beat: We think most people act differently around their families and their friends. Have you ever had this double identity catch up with you and cause you trouble? If not, how do you keep them separated?

Do Good

I'm trying to do good. I wish I could. Hoping to get out of the hood. I'm trying and having a good mind in these crazy times. If I could do right I would change life.

-Trille

From The Beat: You can do any thing you want to that's all you have to do is have the desire for it. What would it take for you to do right and not try?

Dropping Out

What's up Beat, this is Larry form Gilroy telling you about me thinking about dropping out. When I was in high school as a freshman I wanted to drop out because I didn't like the teachers and I don't like doing all that work. The teachers never gave me the help I needed. I didn't drop out, but I just stopped going to school for 2 years. I fell behind on a lot of credits and am trying to make up for time lost. That's all for now until next time.

-Larry

From The Beat: Keep working and making up those credits, Larry. In the mainstream school system it can be so easy to fall behind and then feel like giving up, but there are people out there that want to help you graduate. We hear so much advice in the Beat from other guys to stay in school and graduate, so we definitely thin you're on the right track.

Tough Life

Q vole Beat. Well, hope all is well. As for me it's all the same just a different day. Well, let me kick this off with some game.

Well, as you read this you are wondering who this is, but all you know is that I'm another convict. But I am more than that, but to be real I am a Chicano, been locked up sine August and still pushin' time.

I am a Monster, no, a big-ass homeboy. I am going to be graduating soon. I am a hard-head, I have a major problem with authority. But that is why I'm in here. But on to positive things, I am a smart, young respectable person. But hold on, don't let the kindness fool you. But I wish to accomplish 1 thing and that is to make my mom happy. I've been hurting her for way too long, I don't know why, but maybe it's for what she put me through. My life as a youngsta. But like any other youngsta, life is tough, live life to the fullest, never look back and that's all I got to say for now, but this Monstro is out.

-Monstro

From The Beat: Actually, there seems to be more kindness here than hate. We're sure you're tough, but your concern for your mom and your description of yourself reveal an insightful and sensitive person. But what's wrong with kindness anyway? We think you're the better for it.

A Tragedy

I was on the phone with my social worker, she was asking me some questions about what was going to happen to me, because I came back from the ranch so she thought I was going to the CYA, so she was scared for a while, then the phone was cut off. I was pissed off I went to my room and started reading my book, but I stopped because I had that on my mind. So I stopped and went to sleep.

When I get disappointed I just try to chill and try to calm down, but it stews on my mind and I can't get over it.

-Elmo

From The Beat: Frustration, especially stemming from injustice or feeling out of control, can be hard to come down from. It's good that you recognize your process for dealing with frustration, but can you take a more active role in dispelling it? What things do you enjoy that instantly calm you down? You might try one of those the next time somebody throws you a curve-ball like that.

What I'm About

When I was out
I used to hit the block with a glock
and with my mug on me.
The evidence I leave is irrelevant
at the crime scene,
you can't be a G and try to act like me.
Fool, look into my eyes
and tell me what you see:
Do you see the devil inside
that wants to be let free?
You see, when you test my patience
Big Smiley comes out.
I'll hit you wit these haymakers
and make that color drip out of your mouth.
I'm locked up cause I held up a store,
I gotta stay cool and keep appropriate
while I tell you what I'm about:
I play for keeps and live with revenge,
punk pulled out his keys and got took for his Benz.
I smoke with he devil and drink with demons.
Well sorry Beaters I ran out of time so 'till pencil meets paper.

-Smiley

From The Beat: Smiley, your writing and use of language continues to impress us, but you seem to walk the line in actually figuring out whether you need to change or not. You could use your writing powers for much more good than your glock or haymakers.

In the Family, On the Corner

Some people that important in helping a person to grow from a child to an adult would be the one that's change you. Like one of your family membes or one of your corner. Someone in your community, it could be like your neighbor that's if you hold there for a long time next to them. They could help you grow up if your parents weren't around at the time.

-Unknown

From The Beat: Did someone help you this way? Don't forget to sign your name next time, so you can get the credit for your insights!

My Court Date!

What up Beat? This is Outlaw once again, coming from the max! Well, I went to court and I got sentenced to one-hundred-and-sixty-one days. The catch is I have to go to county jail on my nineteenth b-day.

I grew up in this hall ever since I was 12 years old and now I'm leaving when I turn 19. I can't say it was hell 'cause it wasn't. I have learned a lot from the juvenile system.

It's only March and I won't leave 'till July 21st, but I can't wait 'till I go. The only problem is that I'm still going to be on juvenile gang probation. So if I violate again after I get out, I go to county and come to court here. It's real stupid because I should just get moved to adult probation if they wanna keep me on. I'm not saying I wanna be on probation, but I'm a full-fledged gang member, so I won't get off 'till I stop gang banging which isn't any time soon. Well I'm out, late.

-Outlaw

From The Beat: If you're not thinking about changing, then you will be in your own prison trap. What's wrong with you? Haven't you learn from all those years you've been locked up away. Your whole childhood and youth have been spent behind wall, what else are you expecting? Do you want to spend the rest of your life in jail? This is not a life. When you get to realize it, it will be too late and you'll wish to turned back time.

Christmas Day

I remember this one time on this Christmas that I woke up and opened my presents, smoked a blunt with my brother and then I went to see my cousin to kick it with him but then he started talking smack to me. So I told him that I ain't no punk!

He's like 26 years old and when I was small, I used to look up to him. But now he was talking smack. Me and him started to fight each other. He was beating me up but I caught him with a hot one and broke his tooth off.

But after I left his pad, I was walking to my pad when I passed by some dudes and they asked me where I was from and they told me, so I told them what's up. They got out of their car and were deep. The first one that ran up caught him with a hot one and laid him out – then the other two started to jump me. I was getting on them. Then the cops showed up. These guys ran to their car and I jumped a fence and got away.

-Chino

From The Beat: Again and again you write passionately about these incredibly violent incidents in your life. You are a good writer, a good storyteller, but when will you step back and see how this blood you are spilling will affect the future?

Older Heads

I think people in our community that are important are the older heads. They show us how it is. We should follow their examples of violence and master it so we can own our streets.

-D

From The Beat: Well sure – except that when you look at their lives, is that what you want? Don't forget how many are dead, or locked away for life, or hooked on drugs because it's how the only way they can cope. Is that what you want?

Why Life's Hard

Stuck in a place like
This, I hate this, life a bummer
You have to buzz in to ask
To take a piss
juvenile hall sucks, life's a bummer
some staff are coo's some could eat this,
It's Thursday chillin' with
The homie at The Beat Within
It feels like I'm stuck in
The same place, life's a bummer
Well that's it, late Beat Within

-Shadow

From The Beat: It doesn't have to be this way though, does it? Once you get out, you won't have to deal with these restrictions. What will you have to change to make sure you don't find yourself in this situation again?

It's All Good

Well here I am once again in this cruel facility. I shouldn't be complaining because I'm here based upon my actions. Basically I loved to smoke me some dohja. They put me on EM and I still didn't stop I would stay home and smoke bud all day with the homies and some broads. Until my probation officer got tired of my dirty bottles and decided to take me in.

But I guess it's all good. I'll be out soon.. Till next time.

-Sn

From The Beat: It's all bad when you're so hooked on weed that you'd give up your freedom just to smoke some more. Is smoke more important than being home?

A Good One At Me

What up Beat? Damn, you guys threw a real one at me today. What do I owe myself? Shoot, it's a lot. It's a whole year of my life's worth. I ask myself that all the time, but I always make myself feel better by thinking about what I'm going to do to gain it back.

I owe myself a lot of things like chillin' with friends and family, being there for birthdays and holidays, and chillin' with girls. But the one that haunts me the most is not going to school. I owe myself a high school diploma, because I know that if I were to apply myself I would have gotten it. But I was too busy getting high.

I try not to beat myself up too much over it and I started my GED. I have already taken two tests and hopefully I passed them.

Well Beat, I'm runnin' out of time so I'll write next week.

-Chuck

From The Beat: Good self-therapy! Good thing about all is that you have the energy and the enthusiasm of getting back what you have lost. You can get all back and double it if you like. Don't give up on this goal and thoughts because these are the tools you'll need to succeed. Everything is possible when you desire it with the heart. It's possible! What's next after your GED?

Transitioning

What's up Beat! They got me back in the hall on some charges I committed before I was 18. Before this, I was serving time in county for my first time. It was a whole different ball game in there than what I was used to back in juvie, but I transitioned fast.

Time in county was more serious and there I was surrounded by big homies that are on their way back to prison with long sentences to serve. It was something new to me because I was used to seeing a bunch of adolescents and teenagers get away with nothing but a slap on their wrist. And right when I was getting adapted to the adult system, they bring me back to juvie hall where I grieve everyday about being treated like a kid once again.

The crazy thing is, after I serve my time here in Santa Clara County juvie, I have to go serve time in Monterey County jail where I'll have to transition once more to a more serious and dangerous atmosphere.

-Richard

From The Beat: you're in hard situation Richard. We are sorry for the things you have been facing and are going to face. Keep yourself strong and your mind positive to make it out of here and there safe and wiser. Use your time to learn from your mistakes and to realize what's really important in life. It's time for you to start getting use to positive ideas in how to become a better person, to do things right, and to leave alone the game you've been playing for too long. It's time to really use your time!

The Governator

The California governor is proposing to cut 5 billion of public schools. This means that there will be more ghetto schools throughout Califas, less educated teachers, more teachers that don't give a hell about the students, and more students that don't give a hell about them. Thus, eventually making Califas a higher murder zone than it already is.

This is where some of that 5 billion plays in, by making more prisons than it already has and making the politicians richer than they already are. But I ain't even trippin' by doing this, they are actually helping us out.

-Hitman

From The Beat: Thanks for your inputs in this topic, but how are they going to help you out by taking money away that can be used to better the education that your generation need? How? Give us a good explanation.

Hey Sis

What's up sis? It's your brother. Damn, that sucks we're both in here, but that's what's up? I seen you're keeping your head up and doing what you need to do and keeping outta trouble. I love you sis! Stay up – I'm out.

-Lil' Daffy

From The Beat: The friendship and support between siblings is one of the most powerful and unique relationships out there. It seems like you two have a great one.

Growing up

What's up Beat! This is Turtle chilling in this unit. Well Beat I'm getting out tomorrow. Growing up in San Jose was not that hard like people think or say. Well, growing up with my hood and chilling with them is everything I dreamt of. Well it's not that hard but they are always there for me. They are always down to ride.

-Turtle

From The Beat: What positive influence has the hood had on you and the people that's around you? Have the hood given you more smiles then Frowns or is it the other way around? There's nothing wrong with having love for your hood just make sure the hood have that same love for you in return.

Why I Do The Thing I Do

To The Beat: Well it was my son's birthday on March 15, and it was really hard. I haven't been there for him. I wasn't there for his birth or birthdays. He is two years old and I feel like I owe myself my freedom to be with him and his mom.

The reason I keep on screwin' up is 'cause the environment I was in. I was on the run from my family 'cause they tried to make me go to school. I didn't want to go to, so I started to do bad things.

I got locked up for my first time and I felt like I had no one except my lady. We have been together for six years. I felt like the only family I had was the staff in j-hall. They really helped me when I went to my group homes. I only ran to be with my lady and son.

Well Beat, got to go so 'till next time, late.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: What's wrong in going to school? Education is very important in our life. Don't run away from what's going to make your life easier. Like you said, you have missed the most important and beautiful time from your son. It's time for you to start acting like a father, a father you once needed or still need. He's your son and he needs a father. Are you going to take the right of growing up without a father from him? Also, what are you going to tell your child about school, if you never go?

What They Want

Q-vole Beat! Well, back again to write. This is Stomper, here to talk about these topics. Why can't you guys give us some good topics that we can actually relate to about our everyday lives? Like the way we see it, and not the way this b.s the system wants us to see.

Most of the time the jura (police) want to get us for stupid things and most of the time it ain't even worth what they bring us for.

The only reason they bring us is so they can go home happy 'cause at the end of the day, they still end up gettin' paid and we end up in this wack hall again, and with the same people everyday the same shhh every day.

-Stomper

From The Beat: We would love if you give us topic suggestions about what to write about. What do you have in mind? One more thing related to your piece: is the jura the ones out to get you, or is it you who is setting yourself up to end up on the hand's palms of the jura? Be real!

Almost Out

I got one more month 'till court. I've been here for a number of months, that ain't a long time but it's long for me. I hope I get out, if not I got two more months to go, if I do get out I'm gonna try to go back to school and try to get my GED.

Hopefully I'll stop with the drugs and gang-banging and try to find a better like for me so I can succeed in life and so my family can be proud of me. Well, just hope I get out, nice talking to you Beat. Late,

-Lil' Saigon

From The Beat: If you have the presence of mind to know that you want to stop doing these things, then your success doesn't need to be a matter of hope, just a matter of commitment and determination.

To Hell With The Governor

I say screw the governor because the only reason why he is taking $5 billion from the school is because they want to build more prisons! I think that is hella stupid and they are setting kids up for failure!

Think about it, when they close the schools down, what are all those kids going to do? Nothing! The state just wants to put everyone away for nothing! Like me, I got a few years in CYA for chasing someone! So that is why I say the hell with the state, the governor and everyone they work with!

-Green E

From The Beat: Thank you for your concerns about this topic. You got a good point! But, do you have a solution? Why do you think they are building more jails than schools? Can we say that your current situation be a reason why?

A Positive School Experience

I've had some moments in school when it was the place to be. It might not have been the most positive educational wise, but it was the spot to socialize and kick it. I would just go to chill and game up some honeys.

My first year as a freshman, I thought high school was the place to be, but not to get an education, but to party and socialize. I was younger though, and now that I look back I wish I at least made an attempt to educate myself.

But I wouldn't take the moments back. I had a lot of fun my freshman year, especially when I would run into Mary Jane, drink a little bit of this, and little bit of that. And if the mood was good and that Morgan Hill Weather was right, I would have sex, feel me! I might have not been goin' to school for the right reasons, but I would do it all over again in a heartbeat!

-Silencio

From The Beat: Keep doing it over and over again, and you might end up working your whole life washing dishes or in a Mac Donald's. Is this what you want for your life? The way you write and express yourself tells how smart you are. Don't throw it away!

Growing Up

Well, on the subject of growing up: I kinda grew up by myself. I raised myself. My homeboys from my hood were also an influence on my growing up. My family was always different from me. I was what you call the bad apple of the family. Hopefully, one of these days I'll see things different and grow through this cage and system.

-Jr

From The Beat: It is interesting that you say that you raised yourself, even though it seems your family was around. Feeling different from your family is a difficult feeling, especially when they look down on you. But it seems you recognize that being raised in the system is a lot worse.

Prettey Girl

-Element

From The Beat: Sorry Element, but we can't publish your piece because it's a dedication to another inmate in this facility. Please, find a different way to express your feelings, not through us.

Pina Bound

What's up Beat, this is Goofy. I'm here just chillin' in the max. Well, I am going to talk about something that is important to me. I want to go to prison for about five years. Not too long, my homie Luck"e" wants to go too we have our reasons.

I already been to CYA- One in Ione, Preston, and one in Stockton. CYA is a joke. Hella stupid and unorganized, the good thing is there is hella drugs and the k-9s (police) don't care if you fight, well most of them don't.

To all, if you you're going to CYA don't trip. It's not bad, it's alright. You get to eat noodles and listen to your own radio if you buy one on canteen. Well Beat much love and respect from your boy Goofy.

-Goofy

From The Beat: Do you have any idea of what to expect over there in the adult system? Inform yourself before thinking, saying or making this choice. Are you telling us that being locked up in CYA is nothing? Only someone who doesn't care about his/her freedom and the beauty life offers would say such as thing like that. What's your problem? If that's what you really want, that's what you will get. For sure! Wake up! Hopefully a real homie will lace your ass, before you continue to destroy your life.

Growing Up

I grew up as a smart kid when I was younger, but until I got to my teens. That's when I was learning more about where I'm from.

My two brothers, Sun and Jay, were both in prison. But soon Jay got out, then started always trying to fight me. One time I got mad and hit him with a baseball bat. Then he introduced me to my neighborhood homies, and then I met my cousin Marcus.

He taught me how to smoke, drink, steal and pull licks on houses and people, so I picked up from what he taught me. Then my brother Jay gets stabbed by some fools, then my mom rushes him to the hospital. Then he does something hella stupid over his girl Christina and ends up doing a few years.

When he gets out this winter he's on his third and last strike. Then I meet Ralph from my neighborhood. Then he gets me up on game on how to weigh out drugs, and who's the best.

Then after that, I got locked up many times. When I got released on December 2nd, I went to APA. In my mind, I thought I was going to do my program.

I meet some homies that were talking about a jack move on a gas station, so I'm in the car thinking, "damn, I'm on EMP, but I do it. I'm going to hold up the cashier with a bat, get away, go home, stash some money, and go to bull dogs." Then pretty much it's all bad. So they're charging me with second degree burglary, false imprisonment, possession of a firearm. So I think if I was born in the suburb, it would be different for me.

-Gadsden

From The Beat: It's noticeable that your life has been very hard since such as young age. We are sorry for that. We see a blurry and negative past. What we can't see is what will be in the future. What's in it after those years? What you did was very wrong, but this is how we learn, from mistakes. Some learn the easy way and others the hard way. And clearly you are learning the hard one. What have you learned from all this? Was it worth it? Forget about what your brothers or friends from the 'hood do, and start worrying about getting rid of the lifestyle you are living.

Homie Love

What's up Beat? This is Goofy here chillen' in the max, just waiting to go to the life skills program. Well, I want to talk about homie love. I got love for for the homie hella much, two are in here.

My homie is going to the Ranch. Stay up homie do your time and don't run. One of them out when he's eighteen. Do your time.

When I get out, I'll write to you. Anyways, the other two are out. One of them is a solid homeboy and he is coo with my mom. He makes sure she is alright while I'm locked up. And last but not least my brother.

Damn I love my bro'. He has always been there for me. Well Beat, I just want to let you know I love all my brother I wrote about. Stay up Beat.

-Goofy

From The Beat: Sorry we couldn't print their names in your writing. If you really care for them, you should try to help them out. If someone doesn't do anything for them, who would? In order to do this, you would have to help yourself first. To care about others is a good thing, but first you should take care of yourself first.

Probation

What up Beat! This Lil' Erin from Oakland. I want to tell y'all people that's on EM, home supervision or regular probation need to pimp that shhh, because if you keep coming back for violations your monkey ass going to camp or a group home.

-Lil' Erin

From The Beat: Thanks for the words of wisdom, sounds like you learned this the hard way. We hope you get to a good placement!

Got A Deal

What's crackin' Beat! This is Goofy here. Well, I got sentenced to a few months hall time. That's coo' 'cause they were trying to send my back to CYA 'cause I rushed someone in here.

Now all I got to do is be cool and not fight 'cause they will charge me and send me back to YA. I'm going to a different unit soon. Hopefully things work out. I'm going to the life skills unit. To all my people in here be cool, do your time and get out.

-Goofy

From The Beat: Can you make it this time? All you talk about is about the system, but we don't see a clue of a future in your writing. What are your plans? After these months, you'll be out once again. Are you prepared? If so, prepared for what? Further pain?

Waiting

So once again, what's up Beat? Me good, good. Well I'm just sitting here waiting for my court date, and waiting for trial. If I win, I get out. If I lose, me and a couple of my homies are goin' to the Ranch.

I hope they been coo'. I've just been in here chillin', playin' basketball. That's what I want to be. When I get out, I want to finish school and be the first homeboy to go to the NBA.

Then, I want to come back to the city and hook my family and my homies that have been there for me with something. But yeah, I just want to say keep your head up.

-Da Homie

From The Beat: Everything is possible in this world. Don't give up on your dream. Hey, don't forget to send us your autograph when you become a famous NBA basketball player. Stay away from those places and homies that can take away the breath of success away from you. Get in school if the NBA is something you want! It's not easy, get busy!

Mind Goes Crazy

Every day I think about my life, and I said to myself "I did something wrong." Then my mind goes crazy. I Am holding tight.

-Luis

From The Beat: What if you put your mind to planning for how to change? How to do better? Or if you just distracted yourself with a good book or school studies or letter writing? Does that help?

I Owe Myself to Be Free

I think I owe myself to be free because I could be out looking for a job and having a good life, and doing good for myself. I could have money and be helping my family.

-Alfred

From The Beat: You owe yourself these things and you deserve these things. Now how are you going to get that job and keep that freedom?

I Want To Go To School

Well Beat..... what I think about school is its cool and all but its like I didn't go to school but I'm in the 9th grade.

It's sad cause I hella want to go school, when I get out and I'm going to and a hell of a lot too cause I hella want to go to school.

-T

From The Beat: Do you have a teacher you respect and can learn from, that will help? And are you studying while you're locked up?

Raised By Familia

There really ain't anybody where I come from that will raise or look after someone else's kid. Most people don't look after their own kids. That's why the homeboys turn to the street life.

For me it's my familia that helped raised me. My grandmother and my aunt tried to steer me in the right direction even though I just blew them off the majority of the time. But they never gave up on me. Ha, not even after I got locked up looking at 6 years. They always stood by me. I always thank them for that. I love mi familia, I owe my family my freedom. I'll be out in 6 months.

-King D

From The Beat: You are lucky to have these two wonderful people in your life. Like you said, there are unlucky ones who doesn't have the support you have. You should take that as consideration and try to give back the same attention they have given you. Take the remaining time you got left to think about those who love you and what you really need to change your life. This is the best recommendation we can offer. Whether you take it or not, it's your choice.

Growing Up Can Be Hard or Easy

Growing up can be hard or easy. It all depends on the environment which someone finds themselves in. Like my self I started drinking when I was 11.

I'm not tripping about that though 'cause there's some homies that I know that would get beer in their baby bottles instead of milk. They would get drunk at a young age.

It must've been cool though. Someone that can help someone grow up can also put some one in the gutter. Like the enemies think that they are hella hard 'cause they tweak and like to grow balls when they are on one but then you just got to think that's the way they grew up -- in the gutter.

-Diablo

From The Beat: It sounds like for you, growing up was pretty hard. Was there anyone around to let you know that 11 is too young to start drinking and getting in trouble? Think about it, how can you make plans for adulthood when you're a kid who's getting caught up?

Only Six Days On The Road

I'm sorry Beat but this vato ain't feelin' your subjects today. Well I'm just gone write about what's on my mind.

So I'm back I was only out for six days and now I'm going to ranch. That's wack, whatever.

The cop and the judge, they don't care about me. they just see the bad stuff they see I did wrong, but I'm not the kind of person that cries about things.

I just take it that's part of being a pandillero. So I'll be here for like three more months.

I been here for almost two months. But I ain't trippin'. Ill be out one day I have a homie that's doing nine years and I don't think that's a lil' bit. I don't know how he feels. All I can say is "stay up homie." Well Beat I got to go catch you later.

-Birdy

From The Beat: Maybe it's time to really look at the life of a "pandillero" and see if that's really what you want. Locked up or shot up is no way to be... and right now it's small time, but that could change.

Cut Off Society

Waking up, 'bout to brush my teeth
Coming back to my room with breakfast to eat
I use my sit down and then go to sleep
I'm telling you my life I live seven days a week
Looking out my window that's six inches wide
Cut off from society like I'm not even alive.

-Detained Youth

From The Beat: You won't be cut off from society forever, and in the meantime, you keep yourself alive by staying in touch with loved ones, keeping your mind free, and writing great poems like this one!

Same Shhh Everyday

I remember this shhh like it was yesterday
Gun blast happen too fast for us to run away,
I remember this shhh like it was yesterday
gun blast happened to fast run away.
The shhh a homeboy go through every time you put your gun away
I just pray that I get 'em back someday.
It might not be this month, this year, but one day,
I'll be the one to hear the last words you say.

-Cash

From The Beat: Your rhyme's are tight/but your thoughts ain't right/ another death is the last thing we need in this fight/youngsters dyin' mothers cryin'/ why not put the guns down and try to unite?

Wait Love

Hello girl, wait for a minute.
Let me say what I have to say
then I will be on my way.
The first time we exchanged words to each other
I realized how sweet you were.
I thought I was in a dream,
because I was talking to a girl so sweet,
but it was reality.
No more searching for my one true love
because it was the girl in front of me.
You giving me a hug.
Thanks baby girl for that love and making me feel wanted
What's up girl with the braids it's Chris saying Hi. I would regret not saying that and letting you know I'm feeling you.

- Chris

From The Beat: The first pangs of love really do feel like a beautiful dream, but the real challenge in this life is keeping that dream alive.

New Life

Brush my teeth
Eat my fruit
Go to sleep
Every night is the same
Every day never change
Same ohle shhh
Man it gets me ticked
Is this my life
Just a fight
For my rights
I love life
I'm going to be something
A married man
Or someone with a job
You can't beat the government
There's only one way
It's to stop fighting
And obey them
Then you'll live free
So here I go
I'm gonna stop running from the popos
And if I have to I'll work at Togo's
Just to be a man
So I can put food in a pan

-Anthony

From The Beat: It sounds like you have learned some hard lessons while locked up but I don't know about obeying the government, it's more like understanding how to live in the rules of society.

A Bullet In The Head

What's up Beat? Well today I'm goin' to talk about a time when I was close to death.

I was kickin' it with some homies and a rival group drove in and one of them got off and started running towards us. He started shooting at us, we all started running and when I was about to go in the house, a bullet hit me in the head but didn't reach the skull.

It went in and out and now I'm grateful to be alive, Well that's my story of today Beat, take care.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Wow, we are glad you survived this. It's almost like you were being given a second chance or a wakeup call. Did it work? Has nearly dying changed how you look at life?

Never Went to School

Well I'm not really feeling the topics today. Well I've never really went to school since the eighth grade. When in High School I never went. I would just go to my hood and smoke. Well I got a few more months to go so I'm almost out. Well Beat, this Chino is out.

-Chino

From The Beat: You have to go to school while you are locked up, right? Are you learning in here? Or is it just boring? When you get out will you start going to school?

Caught Up

Well, what's-up, Beat? This be Lil' Bones. When I was in the outs I used to go to school once a week and the rest of the time be kickin' it with the homies, smoking and making money. But then I got caught up and now I'm locked up. I till don't know when I'm gonna be out.

-Lil' Bones

From The Beat: There are two questions here. 1. When are you going to get out. 2. What are you going to do when you get out? Because you don't want to get caught in the system's revolving door, do you?

Make My Mom and Dad Happy

Well growing up well I'm only 15 and I think about is growing when I get out I'm going to try to get a job but I don't think I can cause I'm only 15.

I'm going to try and I'm hella going back to school and make my mom and dad happy. Well beat, that's it.

-T

From The Beat: Maybe you could look at school – and doing well in school – as a full time job. You won't get paid immediately, but the "money" comes when you can get good jobs later because you have an education.

Gonna Be A Dad

Q-vole Beat. Well, what's up? It's this crazy-ass Lil' Man writing once again. Well, I'm not feeling this topic. So I'm gonna write about some news I just got from my Jaina. Well Beat, I'm gonna be a dad. Now, my girl is two months. This is weird.

I really don't know what to do about this. But forget it. I have to deal with it because if I had the balls to come inside her, I have to take what's coming out. So ya, this crazy-ass Lil' Man is out.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Now that you've had a little time to reflect on the news, what kinds of thoughts have you had? Are you scared? Are you looking forward? Are you feeling like you need to change your life around to make fatherhood work?

Temptation

What's up Beat? Well, can't really say what I go by, but it's a lil girl with pretty green eyes. Well today for me is an off day. I'm okay but I miss my dad and my man.

Well, all I ever really ever write about is my man so Ima write about how I'm fighting a lot of temptations and how I want to do so much better than what I've been doing for just about my whole life. I have so much planned for my future, but for now all I have to do is fight my temptations, such as running, fighting, smoking, drinking, ect. My life is going to be great. I know I got talent, but it's up to me to use it. Well, that's about it for now.

-Salinas

From The Beat: That's a long list of temptations. But you are right – you can do it. Just keep in mind that thousands and thousands of kids have done it before you. Stick to it and you can do most anything.

RIP Lil' Ricky

It's me once again, the one and only. Well - how I felt when I lost someone that I loved is that I wanted to retaliate. I was upset because my friend was only 15 years old. He was a very nice kid. He was very out going and kicked back. It makes me sad because I was at his funeral and all his mom kept saying was "Ricky, I just wanted you to change". She regretted all the times she yelled at him. It affected me a lot because I know that my mom always tells me that, and I don't want to change when it's too late.

I want my mom to be proud of me, and I don't want to have regrets about anything.

Well Beat, that's it for now. To all - keep your heads up. Rest in Peace Edgar Ricardo M., April-11-91 till March-28-2007.

-Angela

From The Beat: Angela, we know you won't ever forget your friend. But here's something else not to forget. Revenge will just create more broken hearts and result in more wasted lives. There are no winners when young people mistake each other for "the enemy". There are only losers and more families with broken hearts.

What's Good?!

What's good my peeps and The Beat? Your girl doing okay. I just got a lot of stress taken off my shoulders and I'm very grateful for it.

My grandma just turned 92 on March 15.

I found out I have a nephew instead of a niece, so now I have three nephews and I miss and love all of them.

I still haven't got sentenced, but I'm hangin' in there.

I miss my family hella much. I'm thankful that they are still here for me. I miss my three best friends hella much. I need to get sentenced. I've been here for almost four months and not sentenced yet. I'm light weight scared because it's either ranch or alternative, and that's in another state and I will have to go on a plane, and I'm scared to get on planes, very scared. Just pray for me yall. If I go to the ranch off top my squad is gonna be there, but we shall see.

I can't tell yall how much I love The Beat. It keeps me happy. Before I let you go, I miss my girl mucho, mucho, but we will reunite. Until then "Ima catch ghost" as my girl would say. Love you girl. Keep yall heads up.

-Sephina

From The Beat: Lots of good news from your family. Happy birthday to your grandma. And please, don't worry about flying, if that's what you have to do. Flying is statistically safer than riding in a car. We wish the best of luck.

RIP. Anthony

Life's been hard since you went away. Now I've been thinking of you everyday. Haven't heard from you in a while. I wish I could see your last smile. You were my homie, my closest friend. Why did your life have to end? Can't believe it was really true. The death from the news was you. Rest in paradise Anthony N. You will always be in my heart. Three guys from a gang stabbed him in the ribs and in the neck. They mistook him for another person. His body was found very early in the morning. Rest in Peace brother.

-Krissy

From The Beat: This is a terrible story. Terrible and sad. We are very sorry for you and for your friend's family.

When I Don't Want To Go Home

A time when I didn't want to go home was when I was a young teen. I got my first set of tattoos (mi vida loca). I was scared to go home because my mom had always told me that she would rip off my skin and then sow it back together. She said that I looked like a low life and she was embarrassed to walk in the store with me. But every time I would walk away from her I would get in a fight. Now she doesn't care. She got used to it.

-Angela

From The Beat: We trust you mean that she got used to your tattoos. We doubt she'd ever get used to you fighting.

What's Up Beat?

This place is driving me crazy because we always have to follow rules. I hate being in here. Another thing that frustrates me the most is that my boyfriend is the only person that can understand me but I don't get to talk to him when I'm feeling down. Only when they let us use the phone and this frustrates me! Well, stay up.

-Melo's girl

From The Beat: If you don't like being away from the people you love, you'd better think twice or three times before you make any more of those bad decisions that landed you in the hall.

The Days I Didn't Want To Go Home

Tatiana: Whats up bud?!
Sephina: Shhh, just in here waitin' to get sentenced.
Tatiana: I'm looking at doing 4 months instead of the ranch, but I'm afraid to go home after I do my time. And if I do go home I'm just gonna come back.
Sephina: Just do your time and get out. This is hard for me to say, but switch a different taste in friends. I love you girl.
Tatiana: You know I love you much, too. I can see where you're coming from, but at the same time, it's hard. The thing I'm really afraid of is that I'll find the same type of friends. But maybe not. I guess I'll just wait til I get out. But I promise you one thing, and that is - I will do my very best to change my ways, and I just want to let you know - stay up in here. I pray for your court date and just you period. I hope for you to do good on the outs! But have you even decided what you're gonna do when you get out?
Sephina: I love you Tatiana. You a cool female to chop it up with. You have me laughing, girl. I love that about you. Get out, stay out, and be free. And wait for me. We love you Beat. We will reunite girl. Oh yeah, I'm gonna come stay with you. Not too many parties. Remember what dad said.

-Tatiana and Sephina

From The Beat: We are the 'fly on the wall' here. We hope you do remember "what dad said".

What Do I Owe Myself

Some god darn food! I'm hella hungry right now! All I ate today was a hash brown, jello, pudding, and an apple. They be having hella nasty food here. Some of the stuff looks like it's still alive. I need to get out of here fast! I want some ribs, some egg rolls, and some real chicken, and oh, and some juice.

I want to go back to my county. I ain't even from this county. I gotta be out here 'cause my dad in Richmond county jail and I had to live with my momma. So I'm stuck. I ain't really tripping about being locked up 'cause I ain't wanted at home anyways but I don't know. I'm bored and there ain't nothing else for me to do, right? Dang, I'm still hungry!

-Cookie Monster

From The Beat: Dreaming about good food can be wonderful and torture at the same time. You owe yourself the good food, but what do you owe your parents and those who care about you? What about owing yourself a good education?

Finally Over

I have been here too much and I have been too bad but
in all honesty, I am sad.
I have met great people and have tried over and over.
Now the time's come and I got older. My life starts now,
starts on the outs.
Welcome to the real world. I can no longer pout.
So what to do about all the decisions.
I can no longer wait because I am in the lead position.
I am scared. I must admit I made choices and I might
make them again,
but I know I just can't quit. I'll stay strong for my mom.
My final days are here. I'm scared. I hope I don't do
wrong!

-Chris

From The Beat: Good rhyming Chris. Don't worry about doing wrong. Stay focused on doing right. In each situation, ask yourself what the right thing is. Answer your own question, and then do it. Do the right thing.

When I Was A Young Boy

When I was a young boy my father took me into the city to see a marching band. He said someday you'll grow to lead the marching but instead I got locked up and now those words have changed.

Yes he keeps singing those words because he says he still believes in me. And when I heard him say that, that gave me a purpose to live. It also gave me a purpose to get out and stay out because my family also said they loved me and they still have faith that I will get out.

I am gone to a group home in Sacramento. When I finish my family will welcome me back and I thank God that my family is so nice to me.

-White Boy

From The Beat: You should already have purpose to live. Your whole family believes in you why can't you? We believe in you also. You can do whatever you do whatever you want to do just as long as you're a successful and you like what you do in life. Make up some goals and try to accomplish them. See how far you can go. Challenge yourself.

What Do I Owe Myself

Well I owe myself a lot of my life back cause I gave it all away to my ex lady. I gave her my whole life and everything in it, I feel so stupid for giving her my life to her, thinking she loved me, I even stopped fighting for her so I can stay out for her, man I even shared to her my secrets that I never told anyone things I regret telling her.

Well anyway I owe myself my life back by leaving her and getting out this place. But in a big way the girl helped me open my head and mind about a lot of things that are good, like going to school and stop doing drugs and just finishing my program this time. I know I can do it I just needed to realized and do the right thing. This is what I owe to myself.

-Raymond

From The Beat: Well we live and we learn. It's not good to hear that your ex did you wrong but at least she did help you out to be a better person.

The Stranger

I remember this one day I left my house to go on the run with my sister. We lost all our 520 dollars. Then we were hungry and we were just sitting in front of Togos and then all of a sudden a stranger came up to us and asked if we needed help. I said no, and he pulled out 150 dollars and told my sister and I to never do anything for money, and to do good. I still remember that very day.

-Tatiana

From The Beat: Who could ever forget that? The world is full of decent people, and you and your sister had the good fortune to meet one of them.

Not Feeling These Topics

I'm not feeling today's topics, so I'm going to tell you what's on my mind. I'm getting tired of being here, locked up, doing what staff want me to do. I'm getting tired of these fake wannabes. I just want to go to the ranch and finsh my 6 months so I can finally go home. I just hope these months go by fast. I miss my little sisters, and my mom, and a special guy. I've been here 2 months and I'm not even close to leaving for the ranch. Anyway – don't have much to say so - to those that know me - keep living.

-Karina

From The Beat: You can speed time up by reading good books. Just remember what it's like as you come to the end of a good book. You actually want time to slow down, because you don't want the book to end. So start reading Karina. Read yourself right out of the hall.

My Love

This is for my Danny boy: I hate not being with you but today I heard some shhh about you. It hurts a lot but what hurts even more, my love, is that I can't even confront you on it, but I know its true, my love. You're the only one that I want to be with and no one can take that away from me and you. Baby, you know everything about me. We're in it through thick and thin, baby boy.

I ain't no joke and no lie. It's time for a change baby, for the both of us and we're gonna be together till the end of time. My love: I love you and I'll never let you go. You said I have you sprung and tight up in my hands but what you haven't realized is everything you tell me is the same feelings as mine. When I see you, I know I'm gonna cry. My love, when you're in my arms, I'm never gonna want to let you go. Please keep your promise, baby – that when you get out you are coming straight back to me to what's gonna be our home.

I wana tell you so much more and all I ask of you baby, is be down for me and never let me go because I lost you once and I wouldn't be able to lose you again. I love you, my love.

-Lil' Slick's Baby Mama

From The Beat: It is hard to hear rumors when you are away from the person that they are about because the mind starts running game. It is good to be down for love, but know that you need to respect yourself as well.

I Love You

Today, I'm gonna write about my cousin Loonie. I love her and I hate to see her screwing up and seeing her come in and out of here. But everything always happens for a reason cause I just found out my moms getting custody of her and me so when we get out were gonna be living with my mom. Fool, if you're reading this: I love you fool! Stop messing up and do good! It hurts to see you in here cause I know what your going through and you're not out with the familia partying.

-Clowny

From The Beat: Wow, you and your cousin now have the opportunity to really support each other and become even closer. Maybe living like sisters will help the two of you stay out of trouble.

I'm thankful to my mom because since I got here she has been by my side. I'm really sorry for what I did and I want her to know that I'm really sorry and I regret what I did.

Role Models

I think a good community and neighborhood helps people grow up because they are around good role models that motivate them to do good, such as firemen, doctors, lawyer.

But they all don't need to have good jobs to be good role models. They can have the worst job but be the best person that they could be, so sometimes a bad neighborhood could motivate someone to do good and better themselves so they don't have to go back to rough times. Well that's all Beat, I'll write to you next time.

-Carlos

From The Beat: These are wise insights. Who are the people in your life who have been the best role models? Was it people in your family? Your community?

Growing Up

It's hard growing up for anyone. People growing up knowing only what they were taught by the homeboys around the hood. I loved growing up with the homies at the park. Everyone's down for each other. It's all love in the hood. They tell you what needs to be known and what you should do in a bad situation. If I didn't have my homeboys helping me grow up and getting me through my hard times, I don't know what I would've done. But I wish I would've listened to them to them about the one I thought loved me so much and now realized how true my homeboys advice was, I just want to send them my love and hope they stay safe.

-P-wee

From The Beat: It is a powerful feeling to realize that your friends actually were looking out for you. Your piece is interesting because you realize what is bad about being raised by the homeboys, and what is good.

First Time Here With A Lot Of Regrets

Never thought that by me doing what I did I was going to end up in here. I regret doing what I did. It wasn't worth it because now I'm in here just thinking and missing the people that I love.

I think about what I could have been doing in the outs instead of being in here, I could have been playing soccer or spending time with my babe. I'm thankful to my mom because since I got here she has been by my side. I'm really sorry for what I did and I want her to know that I'm really sorry and I regret what I did.

Now all I got left is to behave in here and do my time. I miss my babe, I want to apologize to my babe because now my babe is in the outs alone but I know that my babe will wait for me as long as I have to be in here. I love my babe with all my heart I hope I get out soon. I wanna tell everyone to keep your head up and don't let no one get you down. I learned my lesson and I'm never coming back.

-Chunky Monkey

From The Beat: It seems like the people who are the most successful are the ones who are really thinking about what they did to get them in here and working to make a change, so it sounds like you are on the right path.

Just Bored

So I'm just sitting here counting down the days to my 18th birthday and my release date. For a month I'm going to be staying in Sacramento with my momma. I barley met her four years ago, so it will be nice to get to know her more and spend time with my little brother and little sister. I just hope I can be the most positive influence on them.

I'm just ready for that change in my life to do my stuff and make my money. My plan when I get out is to get my phone turned on and put money on it so my girls can call me, get my hair done, nails, and toes. I'm ready to go shopping like you don't even know. Dang, I'm excited.

-Alexandria

From The Beat: It is nice to hear how you will take care of yourself when you get out. What does the change you are thinking about really mean for you though, besides going back to your old ways?

An Experience In School

Everything I ever learned in school is useless. You will never use it in real life... ever! But I do think that college is important. They teach you stuff that you will actually use and need in life.

-David

From The Beat: David. We have two words for you: you're wrong. You're wrong for lots of reasons, but one of them is that if you don't learn some of the basics in high school, you won't make it to college. Period.

My View On Education

In my opinion, education is power. I believe it is a key tool needed to be successful in every aspect of life. Whether you are going to be a doctor or live the rest of your life in prison, you'll need to be educated to survive. All knowledge is good knowledge, so soak up all you can and use it when it's needed. Remember- only the smartest survive.

- K

From The Beat: So, we take it that you are soaking up knowledge, right now. That's good.

An Experience In School

I think my teachers from my old school could have told me that I am going to be the next doctor or lawyer instead of saying that I'm going no where in life. I didn't really go to school that much. I wasn't really interested. Now that I'm locked up, I wish I was in a real school. I didn't attend school because I didn't want to.

-Robert

From The Beat: Sounds like you didn't get much encouragement from your old school. We're sorry that that was your experience. But when you get another chance, don't wait for good words from others. Have faith in yourself. Work hard. In time, you'll turn heads. In time, if you want to, you'll become that doctor or lawyer. And you'll be in a position to speak with real authority to kids who are going through what you've been through. Wouldn't that be cool – to visit juvy and tell your success story to the kids who are going through what you've been through.

It Takes A Village To Raise A Child

It takes more than one person to raise a child. It may be your wife of your mom or maybe your sister. It's not easy to raise a child by yourself. It takes two people to take care of a child because the man has to work and the woman takes care of the kid. If the woman wants to work, the man can take care of the kid.

-George

From The Beat: And you're right, too. Although recent history is full of incredible moms who have somehow managed to do it all – earn a paycheck and raise a child, or children, all on their own.

Knock Out

As I snake
My way toward my brother
I see him and knock the wind out of him.
He tries to run but he is passed out.
My mom screams my name
But I can't hear her
'Cause the music is too loud in my room.
I hear numerous knocks in my room
So I take a look out my window.
I noticed it is dark
And it's also raining
So I creep out my window.
The scent of the grass hits my nose
Sitting in the middle of my garden
Just tripping out not knowing what to do.
I feel my eyes getting heavy
So I know it's time for me to sleep.
I stand up and shake the dirt from my pants
And sneak back into my room.
I get stoned and then go to sleep.

- Inocente

From The Beat: Strange story Mr. I. Are you telling us you didn't know enough to come in from the rain?

MARIN

A Changed Man

About a year ago is when I first stared getting locked up and I kept getting locked up, like each month, and my grandma couldn't control me, and I was at the point of going to placement.

I used to see my grandma cry almost every night and she kept telling me that I was going to end up like my dad and go to prison just like him, and that touched me, because my grandma started having hate for me. I felt bad for my grandma, because she's the only person I love in this world, so I wanted to change for my grandma.

When I was locked up for my birthday on September 22nd, I was thinking about a lot of stuff and when I got out, I changed my life and haven't been back 'til now, but it was just a little thing and I'm getting out on the bracelet and not coming back. Well, at least I'll try for my grandma.

-Kasper

From The Beat: Your grandma probably needs you at home, and you need to go and stay home. Whatever has been messing with your life so far on the outs, we hope you can move beyond it and create a new life for yourself!

My Neighborhood Ain't Nothin' Nice

Growing up (where I'm from), it ain't nothin' nice. Every day ninjas fightin', ninjas stealin' cars and doin' the foo'. In (where I live) we some beasts. I can't help it, but I do what I do. My ninja taught me how to get beezies. Uncle Drake taught me how to get my money and how to sell drugs. I'm a young beast, just like I told the judge--that's why I'm back in here and going to placement, but it's coo'. I'm gone always remember where I'm from. In (my neighborhood) People getting shot up. Ninjas running from the police. People on high-speed chases.

(My neighborhood) ain't nice since my cousin died, His name Mark. Yeeeee. Now ninjas on the block is doin' the foo'. The (neighborhood) go yankey in parties to yankey. We get kicked out, but when we do, we go to the block and get illy and purkey and we smoke that purple tree—yeeee. RIP, Mark.

-Stevie

From The Beat: Sorry, we had to cut some references, but you describe very vividly how the danger in your neighborhood is hurting your homies and you. You don't have to do what you do, and you know it.

Growing Up

Growing up, I guess it was good for the part of my life. I was born in Minnesota, but after I was born, I moved to Laredo, Texas, with my family--that's my mom's older sister and my older brother--At least that's from what I know, 'cause I've never really took the time to ask my mom. So, anyways, when I was about three years old, I moved to California.

I was practically born in California, 'cause I don't remember much from when I was in Minnesota or Texas. When I moved down here to California, I was living in some Bay View apartments. From what my mom and older sister have told me, when I was a little kid, I was such a troublemaker. They told me that when I was little at mi abuelo's (grandfather's) house, which is in Laredo, Tejas, I almost made myself and Grandpa get runned over, 'cause I had walked out the house fence without telling anyone and mi abuelo saved me from getting hit by a car.

Another story that I don't remember, but my mom told me about, was when, I guess, when I was little, I was playing with a beehive. I guess I was throwing rocks and sticks at the beehive and wouldn't leave it alone. Finally the beehive fell on me or very close to me, that the bees just started stinging me everywhere—my face and my arms.

Also, there's another time where I was being such a bad ass. I kind of remember this one. Mi jefita (mother) had parked the family van out in a parking lot while she was getting something in the house. She left me in the passenger seat. I unbuckled my seatbelt like a little demonio and got in front of the steering wheel. I started playing with that one stick that puts the car in park, reverse, neutral, drive1,2, and I accidentally put the car in reverse. I guess it really wasn't much of an accident, 'cause I got up on purpose, but I was a little kid; I didn't know. So I put the van on reverse and I started to realize the car started moving back. (to be continued.)

-Shy Boy

From The Beat: Great stories about yourself when you were a child. It's too bad you don't remember your own version of them. When you see a photograph of yourself when you were little, can you remember what was going on when it was taken? Are you still any kind of troublemaker—the funny kind?

Man, forget the system

They always mess and try to play

But no mater what

I'm still gonna stay and pray

This War

Growing up in my neighborhood is really rough, with guns going off every hour. The thought of walking to the door and getting shot. I got to walk down the street with my heat to the corner store every day. Forget Iraq, we warring every day in my 'hood.

-Cherski

From The Beat: Do you mean that every time you leave home you feel you need a gun with you? You imply that you carry it defensively—to protect yourself, but does the mere fact that you have it with you influence you into getting into dangerous situations you might avoid if you were not armed? What would happen if you lived your life without any weapons? Put the damn gun down, before you get hurt!

You Always Peekin' At Me

Yah, she mad now, but she gone come back. She can't resist me. I know you can't hide it. You mad today, but happy tomorrow. You can't even stop looking at me. Yep, I see you peekin'. You feel bad when you mad at me.

-Jade

From The Beat: Don't be too cocky. If she doesn't come back, then what?

I'm From...

(Where I live) is a cool place to live in.
I just sit back, relax, and think about all the stuff I been in.
I'm only seventeen, but it feel likes I'm 30.
I been in situations where the scenes were dirty.
Police running through everybody' house
Tryna find murder weapons.
I cut change now--I been in it since I was eleven.
You lil' cats don't know what it is, y'all still hitting them lil' licks
While I'm choppin' it up with a beezie--she breakin' me off big chips.
Whoever killed (my homie) better know--this ain't no game.
They call me Lb and I'm keeping the name.
You can find me (where I live) any day of the week.
Not caring about nobody; standin' on my own two feet.
I keep geekin' off the drugs; I can't even think.
I'm waiting for somebody to slide through; I won't even blink.
Girls keep mailin' me while I'm locked up, tellin' me how they feel.
But when I get out, I'm gonna hit the strip and see how they pearl deal.

-Lb

From The Beat: You sound like you really have been through a lot where you live, but the drama you allude to sounds all-time dangerous. You also imply that you intend to go right back to the streets when you're free again. If so, what do you expect to be different? Could you imagine a life where the police don't storm your house for any reason? When you don't involve girls in your enterprises? When you don't wait for your rivals to slide through? How else can you create a life beyond the streets? Or do you intend to live and work there until some ultimate drama comes down?

Forget The System

Man, forget the system
They always mess and try to play
But no mater what
I'm still gonna stay and pray
Stay solid, blowing hay
Stackin' scrill
Bustin' ills
Man, you ain't unknowin' how I feel
Be real
Never fake
Do it big
Eat some filet miñon steak
All I mess with is with trees
Never stir and bake
If you ain't knowin' now
Now you know--stay chill and blow

-Lil' O

From The Beat: It might be nice to be able to "forget" the system, but as long as you're inside, or creating more mess on the outs, the system's going to be in your face and your business. It sounds like being in juvy hasn't taught you that if you go back outside and stack more scrill, mess with trees, etc., you'll be right back inside or somewhere worse. Does your life have anything else going for it besides being involved with drugs? How else can you earn some money legally? How can you have fun legally?

PIECES • OF • THE • WEEK

How I Feel About My Parents

To me, my family is the world to me because they were the ones who brought me into this world. When I came in here, I started to think of a lot of stuff 'cause my dad gave me everything I asked for. And me, I have to end up in here for him to be wasting hella money for me to be here. And for him to be working hard and tryna give his family more than he has got hen he was a little boy. He didn't get a high school diploma or go to college. He dropped out of school when he reached 6th grade because his dad made him start working at a young age.

So, when I get out of here, I'ma straighten up and get a job, finish high school and get my diploma.

My mom is a housewife. My dad didn't let her work or learn how to drive, so she can take care of our family like a wife is supposed to do, like feed us, do our laundry, clean up the house and all that. Also, she baby sits little kids at our house and helps my dad out, even though he can do it on his own.

My parents came from Mexico and started their lives out there with a family of six. Now my dad is doing big things. He has two houses. He rents one and we live in the other one.

-Roger

From The Beat: Your dad and mom have sacrificed a lot in their lives for you Roger, and now you see that it's time for you to do some sacrificing for them. That means it's time for you to take school seriously so you can do the things your dad was not able to do, and give them the son they know you can be. We don't know if a wife is "supposed to do" the things you describe or not (a lot of women might disagree with you about that), but we do know what a responsible son is supposed to do for her parents and for himself. It's time you started doing those things. It will not only make your parents happy, it will also make you happy.

Hard To See You As Me

A young Latin boy filled with innocence and care
Lookin' for someone inside himself, but no one's there
First day after being born, the father's not around
To comfort his son when he's sad and down
Looks up to his older brothers who know about drugs, banging, money and power
Watching his back every single hour
The innocent boy is not yet fifteen years of age
Finds himself locked up in a human-sized cage
So the innocent young man is now a criminal mind
Having dreams of murders every single time
By now you think this fool should see the light
But now he joined the gangs and nicknamed him Droops
Kicked out the house and left in the cold
Have you been through this at ten years old?
He says to himself over, "No one cares for me"
Then makes his bed in the park by an oak tree
So the next time by a park bench, how long can it last?
Will I forget my dreadful past?
Change is good for those that wait
I'm back to my innocence, but still have fear
That death is upon me and is drawing near
But people say it's hard to see
This life of emotion is all about me

-Droopy

From The Beat: We are all a combination of our genes (what our parents contribute to us through birth) and our upbringing. No child has any control over either of those factors, so what you experienced has helped to mold you into the young man you became and the young man you are. But at some point, we begin to make choices for ourselves that help to determine the adults we will be. There is no way you can or even should forget your "dreadful past," but you can overcome it so that it doesn't lead you to a dreadful future. It sounds to us that you are transforming yourself into that adult you want to be and that we know you can be. Tell us how you are moving back into innocence, and what your plans are when you walk away from this place.

The Cats

After watching all these cats come in and out, it's my turn to get released. The cop who brought me to Hillcrest told me that I have a certain look that when cops see me walking down the street, they wanna talk to me.

The cats I see here are the same cats that were jackin' little kids back in the day. And a lot of these cats are gonna end up in county jail. The criminal tradition is a tragic dead end for all of us 'cause we get stuck in the mentality, and we start slippin'. Then we pull one too many licks, and it's a wrap.

I'ma make it in life and prove everybody wrong.

-D-boy

From The Beat: There's only one person you have to prove right, and that's you. We agree with your description. People get into habits, and once in those habits, they stop thinking about what they're doing and just do it. That's when they make mistakes, and some mistakes have long-term, even permanent, consequences. So, be glad that you have a good mind that's able to analyze the problem clearly, and the determination to make the changes you know you must make if you don't want more of what you're experiencing now. Do you have a plan of action for when you walk out of here? What are some of the things you're going to do... and not do?

My Vato Is Gone

As you're holding me from behind
I feel your heart beat on my back
You're kissing me on the cheek
And saying, "Your vato is here"
I turn around, our chests meet
I look in your eyes like it's gonna be the last time
Hella homeboys all around
But all I can see is you
I lay my head down on your chest
So I can listen to the beat
The beat within your chest
Your heartbeat
I feel a tear coming along
You sense the tensing in my arms
He knows I just lost my best friend
I look in his eyes
He smiles
I hear him mumble something
But I couldn't understand
So he had to tell me over again
"You're gonna be my jaina until the end, just you and me"
I smiled and said, "Come on"
Not knowing that he would soon be gone
He takes me by the hand
We walkin' down the street real slow
He leaning like a cholo
And looking at me
He takes me to a lake where it is real cold
We sit down and talk as he rocks me real slow
I know he is the one that I've always wanted
That night, I fall asleep in his strong arms
When I woke up he was gone
He was lying there with a needle in his arm
My vato is gone
My vato's death date, 06/02/06
May he rest in peace

-La Guera

From The Beat: You tell this tale with such beauty and grace/We were entirely unprepared for the ending place/In our minds we hear his words, we see his face/And think about what could have been... Damn! What a waste!/He lived his life as if running a race/When we're built to take it at a slower pace/And now, but for sweet memory, he's gone without a trace...

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Life Is A Struggle

Life is a struggle. Everything is a test.
Nowadays, people got to watch for their chest.
It's not so easy, like cops in their vest.
I tell myself what did I do to get myself in this mess.
I'm not hurting myself,
but bringing my moms all this stress.
I am only sixteen and I earn my respect,
But for what? I'm living life in regrets.
It's hard for a Latino trying to come up in the game.
It's like every cop in the world knows your name.
I am the one who's going to break this chain
And stop the tears of my family pain.
Because life ain't no game.

Much love to my family, and keep your heads up.

-Brown Bear

From The Beat: No, it's not easy coming up when you are surrounded by negative influences and have few resources to overcome them. But that means you have to work all the harder to grow into the man your mom already sees in you, and which you now see in yourself. Nothing worth achieving is easy, but that is not a reason to keep yourself from continuing to make the changes you have already begun to make in your life. We admire you, and we know you can do it.

The Way I Think

What's up, Beat? This Casper. I got some things to write down. It's the things that are stuck in my mind every day.

I think about bad things in life, never good. I wonder who will miss me if I die except my family. Is this my life? I think I don't have one. I always feel lonely, even when I was a kid.

Everywhere I go I feel lost, like I don't belong here, but not in my barrio. I always hurt people, and when I don't, I think about it. I feel like the stress, anger, sadness, depression and loneliness is going to make me snap and do something bad.

My family depends on me to do this and that, and I let them down. I can't sleep at night, never could. I dream of evil things. I stress a lot about things, even about nothing. If my grandpa dies, will I lose my mind? When will my enemies kill me? I'm afraid to love because it is a weakness to soldiers. The inside of me has been hurt more times than the outside. People hurt me mentally and don't know they did. But me, I keep the pain inside.

I hear screams in my sleep. It makes my dreams evil. And evil is what I come, and it is what I do. But this is the price I get for selling my soul to the devil. I feel like I'm a product. They make my life as bad as possible. Give my mind the worst treatment and see how I react. I don't know who I am or what I want. But that's the way I have to live.

-Casper

From The Beat: You are not evil and you have not sold your soul to the devil, even if you have done and thought things that you hate to do and to think. The darkness that you describe from your mind is related to the experiences in your life as a child — things you had no control over. Of course, none of this makes those feelings go away, and that is why we spoke to you about talking with someone who might be able to help, someone you trust to talk these things out. You said that "mental health" people haven't been able to help you, but don't give up on them. Maybe you will find that one person who understands and who can help you understand. In the meantime, we love talking to you because you have a fine mind and a willingness to be honest with us about what you're thinking. Don't beat yourself up for "letting your family down" because you are suffering. If you had a broken leg and couldn't help your mom, you wouldn't hate yourself for it. Even though you can't see the "broken leg," it's the illness that makes you feel as you do. And one last thing, Casper: Love is not a weakness, but a strength. Even soldiers seek and find love. You can too.

The Lies We Tell The Young Ones

When I got send here to the juvenile hall, my mother told my sister that I wasn't going to be with them for a while. What my mother said to my younger sister is that I went to San Diego, California, for a soccer tournament, and that I wasn't going to be back for a while.

That same day that they locked me up, was the same day of my lil' sister's birthday, which she turned seven years old. I thought to myself that I'm not going to be there for that very special day of my sister. Then my sister will probably question my mother where am I, and my mom will tell her that I'm still in the soccer tournament.

So when I get out of this place, and when I get home, the first thing I'ma do is go and give my sister a big hug and a kiss. Then I'ma tell her the reason I wasn't there for her birthday is because I was at San Diego in the soccer tournament. I know it's gonna be hard for me, because I'm lying to her, but she's too young to know about his kind of bad stuff. She don't know about the good and bad things about life.

-Ozzy

From The Beat: It's truly sad that you were not there in person for your sister's 7th birthday. Whatever story she hears from your mom or you, she felt the pain of your absence, which is why you feel the pain of not being there. We agree with you that she is too young to understand the system we have that takes siblings from their homes. But, of course, she's not too young to know the difference between right and wrong, and you have to be there to provide the guidance that an older brother should provide to guide her along the right path. She will follow what you do more than what you say, so whatever you do in the future, ask yourself if you also want her doing those things. If not, don't do them!

Heal Me

It seems like nothin' in my life is the same
So I smoke, drink, and pop pills to get rid of the pain
And while I'm high, it seems like things have changed
But in the end, the reality's the same
I mess with random girls that I just make love to
But I want a girl who can say "I love you"
Every time I mess up, it causes a lot of fury
So I do a few drugs to make everything blurry
But that ain't gonna make the time I'm facin' hurry
So I should stop comin' back
They gave me a chance with the charge I got, but I always come back
I ran from my group home again
And my brother asked, "What were you thinkin'?
Now that you've messed up, dad went back to drinkin'"
So now I know that if I mess up, my dad will surely follow
If I hurt him enough to make him go back to the bottle
I know it's my fault, and ill never forget it
They keep tellin' me where I could go, but I can't seem to get it
I'm tired of the streets and its random girls
So I'm goin' let your power heal me
And stop doin' what I'm doin', Lord God, before it kills me

-Slim Shaney

From The Beat: The first thing to say about this very sad but very fine poem is that you are not responsible for your father's alcoholism. In fact, it's much more likely to be the other way around. But in the end, it doesn't matter who causes what... He is responsible for his own choices, you are responsible for yours. You have been medicating yourself with drugs and random sex to help you forget the aches and pains of your life, but they have only made those aches and pains hurt more, adding another problem that you have to confront. None of us can move forward without help, so we urge you to get help. Seek out AA or NA. Clear your mind and clean your body, so that you don't feel so defeated. If you can gain that self-control, you will be in a far healthier position to help you stay free and begin to build your own life. Love will find you when you are healthy. If we can help you in any way, please ask. And keep writing and exposing your emotions and thoughts to the cleansing air.

PIECES • OF • THE • WEEK

Earth To Hell

When I sleep in this world, I wake up in another. In the other world, it's dark all over, not a single star or a moon to light the sky. The only thing that lights the sky is the fires that surround me coming from the ground.

The ground is made of dirt, dried dead dirt. From where I stand, all I see is fire… not a single tree or a blade of grass. All I hear is the screams of men and women screaming in pain as if they are being tortured alive. I hear the cries of babies. They cry out loud in pain. No mother to care for them. I smell smoke and burning flesh. I can feel the heat from the fire. It feels like being in a oven. The heat's all around me cooking my skin. When I walk, the fire doesn't move. It doesn't get closer and it doesn't move away.

I look up to the sky. It's black like night darkness. I look to my right and left… nothing but fire. I start to run, but it takes me nowhere. The screaming and crying never stops. It continues. I hear someone walking towards me from behind. I quickly spin around to face whatever it is, but nothing is there. Then I hear, "Welcome," from behind me.

I turn slowly and there's some kind of monster standing there. It's skin is black with little red cuts here and there, like open stab wounds. It's head is shaped like a pit bull, but stands like a human. The eyes are blood red with tiny black dots in the middle of both of them. It ha long black hair from its head to its shoulders. I see blood dripping from its hands and fingernails. It has long sharp nails. It opens its mouth and a human eyeball rolls out and falls to the floor. It rolls and stops in front of me.

When I look up, the monster is gone. I start to notice that I can't breathe. It feels like I take a hit of a cigarette, but won't exhale it out. I start to panic, but next thing you know, I wake up hot and sweating all over, sweat dripping down my face and breathing fast and hard, like if I was holding my breath.

-Casper

From The Beat: Your powers of detailed description are remarkable, though what your describing must be terrifying! We have met very few people (in the hall or out) who have your writing skills and your abilities to paint such powerfully graphic word pictures. These skills tell us that you have strengths that you may not even know you have, strengths that you may be able to use to hold the monster at bay while you find the weapons to help you put it out of your misery. We are not equipped to know what those weapons are, but we're willing to bet that you already possess them, and that what needs to be done is to find them and to learn how to use them to your advantage. We will try to help you find others who know more about this than we do. In the meantime, keep writing as well as you do.

My Plan

When I get out, I plan on going back to school
Graduate, get my high school diploma
Seal my record and find a job
Help my mom out as much as I can
I plan on going to college and getting' my degree
Get past college and go to trade school
Learn a trade and join the union
Get the paypa and live my life
Try to find a down-ass girl
Start a family and don't mess up
Look at every day as just another
Retire and live life to the fullest
Grow old and support my family
Sooner or later, die and be in heaven

-Ray

From The Beat: We like the way you laid this out, step by step. That is what we call a plan, and that is what is needed to get what you want out of life. Take it one step at a time, starting with that school diploma and trade. After that, the paper and the girl and the family will follow naturally.

Is Love Just A Myth, Or…

As I lay in my bed
I wrap up in these rough blankets
I look up to my ceiling and daydream
The slow jams are on nice and slow
My roommate's asleep
The room is getting cold
Flashbacks of all my lovers in the past
Remembering some of the stupid things I used to do
Plenty of funny memories in the back of probation cars
I used to be so free
Even when I was on probation
But now I'm older and see a lot of my wrong doings
A 15-year-old freak
I used to take advantage of things
Now I treat my body like gold
A lot of people talk too much about me
But I don't care
I know what I've done and who
How did I live my life the way I did
I used to be lustful all the time
I never tried to settle down with just one guy
I always had one extra just to feel more satisfied
But I can't be cheatin' all my life
That's why I'm looking for that special guy
Sex is great, but so is love
And love last longer than pleasure
I've changed in so many ways
But now I'm reminiscing of those old days
So as I listen to one of my favorite songs, "Weak"
I think of how I used to be
Always thinking that every guy that comes around can be the one
But the one was never there
The one is always there no matter what
He loves you and shows it
Has no hesitation to show it
Where is my Romeo
Is he looking too hard for love like me
Or is he not really reality
Is it all just a myth
Well, wherever you are, I'm waiting for you
Like LL Cook J said, "I need love"

-Blue Eyes

From The Beat: And like we say, love yourself! That comes before all else. We think you're in love with the idea of love, and that can be a very dangerous feeling to carry around with you. It makes you vulnerable to any boy that comes around and makes the sounds that you want to hear. At the same time, it's obvious that you are growing up, and that in your developing maturity, you're beginning to ask very good questions about the reality of love (and the mythology of it, too). There is no "perfect" other, only flawed human beings like us all. The changes that you describe are all examples of the process that is turning you from a girl into a responsible woman. That process is not yet over. Give it a chance to grow.

I hear the cries of babies. They cry out loud in pain. No mother to care for them.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

I drink beer because I forget about the pain when I'm drunk. But when I turn sober, all I find is new pain inside.

That One-Way

I got that one-way ticket
To that forever freedom
Before I leave, I find someone to lean on
Searchin' and searchin' in all the wrong ways
I found my lil' mama that will help me lead the way
I got that one-way ticket
But where will I go?
Paris, Rome, Venice, the Islands, Mexico?
So many places to run, but nowhere to hide
Or will I get stuck on the block
And die with only my pride?
I got that one-way ticket,
I wanna leave!
I need to go now!
The gates are closing above,
The only road open is Casper's inferno' hood
Which is way down below where the hollow souls lay
This is my final chance
To take that one-way ticket
Or the only way out is down
To that never ever freedom

-Clean

From The Beat: When you know that you're operating on your last chance, then why not take what's offered and move up instead of down? Getting stuck on the block is just another way of saying you're stuck in your head, because "the block" is a state of mind, an attitude that you can overcome. It's very clear that you have the brains to see where you are, and to realize you're at a fork in the road. But we've learned by now that brains are not enough (even though they are a gift you should treasure). You also need courage and determination. Do you have those qualities?

The Pain Inside

The pain inside screams to be let out. But I keep it deep inside my black heart. It gets a new kind of pain added every day. When it overfills, it becomes my anger. I let some of that anger out on my victims.

Some pain moves into my mind. So I can't sleep. But when I do, I hear it scream and cry. The pain turns my dreams into nightmares. I see them crying and bleeding. They chase me in my dreams.

I drink beer because I forget about the pain when I'm drunk. But when I turn sober, all I find is new pain inside. The pain inside my mind tells me to fight. The pain is a part of me as my own blood. The pain puts visions no one sees but me. I can't remember when the pain started, but it grew more as I grew older. It continues to grow every day.

The pain in my heart stops me from loving and having feelings and emotions for others. The pain flows through my veins faster than blood. The pain keeps the fire in hell burning forever. I sold my soul to the devil and got in return a pain that will never go away. It will never die. It is called "Evilness." That evilness is the heart that pumps the pain in my veins.

The Devil awaits me in Hell. I got front row seats to burn in Hell for eternity and endless pain. But for now, I'm on earth gaining as much more pain as possible before leaving. The pain inside will never die, but we will. It kills us slowly from the inside.

-Casper

From The Beat: Oh, Casper, we wish we could open your mind and show you that your "evilness" is a trick of your brain, something that masks all the good you won't allow yourself to feel, but that is still there. If there is a Devil (and we say IF), then there also must be a God who created you, a God whose plan for you is not evil but good. We don't know if you believe in God or not, but if you do, is there a priest or minister that you could talk to about these feelings? As we've said before, we are so glad that you are using our pages to express what you feel, but we are not up to the task of knowing how to respond and how to help. For that, you need to find others more experienced in what it is you're going through. We'll try to help you find someone like that. In the meantime, keep writing to us and try to get some sleep. We're on your side.

WEEKLY WRITINGS

And Then You Die

Life is hard and then you die
But sometimes you might wonder why
Life's what you make it and what you don't
But it always seems to make people cry
Good or bad, it's all the same
And sometimes it feels like a game
So make the most and ask why
Is life hard and then you die?

-J

From The Beat: Why do we live? Who can say?/All we know is that we're here today/And while it's true that our tears may fall/We've been around long enough to know that's not all/Sometimes we laugh, we sing and we dance/So maybe life's game is to find that balance.

Telling My Brother The Truth

When I'm in the hall, my aunt tells my little brother the truth about where I am. When I get home, my brother is happy to see me. My brother just asks me how it was, but he knows I'll go back again.

When I was younger, my mom would tell me my dad went to Mexico for a little bit when he went to jail and I would be sad he was gone.

-Erick

From The Beat: This makes us sad, too. First, how does it make you feel that your brother know you'll come back here again? And why is that? Why can't you stay free, with your loving family where you belong? Why are you repeating the pattern that your father modeled for you? Why not break that cycle so your brother doesn't follow you?

The Truth Hurts

The truth is filled with lies and fake cries
What to tell your loved ones when they ask for the truth?
You know inside that in reality
The real deal is grimy
And can hurt the ones you love

-Flores De San Mateo

From The Beat: But can you protect the ones you love from pain by lying? If the truth is grimy, then maybe you need to change it.

These Four Walls

These four walls are the ones that are keeping me away from my freedom and away from my family. I don't know and can't understand how four simple things can make you feel so miserable. Every time I am trapped in these four walls, all I think is how to break the cycle, the thing that makes me come back. But once I'm in the outs, I forget all about the feelings that I had passed through.

Oh, but now I got an idea that can help me to break my cycle. Keep my feelings real. So, in the outs I want to still remember how I felt trapped in these four walls, for not to come back.

-Jarocho

From The Beat: It is strange, isn't it, that even know the things that lead you to this place you hate and swear never to come back to is not enough to keep you from repeating those mistakes once you are able to make your own free choices. Here's an idea for you: Cut out this piece of your own writing and tape it to the mirror in your bedroom at home. That way, you will be reminded every day of how miserable these four walls can make you, and maybe you can avoid meeting them again.

What You Say is What You Are

Stay Brown, stay proud
Stay Black, stay proud

Don't be afraid to be what you are 'cause all you can e is you! You'll never be anything else but you, so be the best you you can be. Keep it real… by all means… at all times.

Whether a lawyer, doctor, gangsta, football player, toilet cleaner, garbage handler… Keep it real… and still… be the best you can be.

Have pride, have dignity, stand! Stand proud, talk proud, act proud, be proud. Don't lay down, back down, bow down, run away. Those who don't recognize you… take it or leave it!

I can't be you, but I'm a damn good me!

-Droopy

From The Beat: We want to know more about what makes you so damn good. Can you fill in a few of those blanks for us?

My Lady

It's me and you against the world, Baby
And we been outnumbered by haters from the start
It ain't no thang 'cause you my one an' only who has my heart
Nine months in the dark with no one but pain in my heart
It feels like just yesterday I was huggin' an' kissin' you at the park
But now I'm writing you love letters in the dark
Wishin' these walls didn't have us apart
You my ride to die that would never lie
You my drug to my natural high
I'm yo' ride to die, promise to never lie
To do my best to not make you cry
I love you girl, no lie
Always and forever, 'til I die

-Creeper

From The Beat: If you have found your soul mate for life, then why would you give it all up for this? You say that it's you and her against the world, but it seems like not even you are on your side… We don't doubt the love you express here, but words are so much easier than actions. The place for a real lover is by his beloved's side, and that takes putting her above whatever choice you made that brought you here. That's a lot harder than just saying, "I love you, girl."

I Got You

Verse
I'm 18, and got ninjas that's fightin' murder beefs
A lot of 'em deceased
And what's crazy is that they just like me
Young thug ninjas on the block
Pitchin' rock
Retaliating when it beef and runnin' from cops
We live the street life
Middle finger to do the law
All I get in this world is my word
And my balls
Family ova e'rything
Friends ain't shhh
Look at the ninja next to you
He probably a snitch
Real talk, half of these ninjas fake
But I'm ready to die
So I don't really don't have to cry
Karma the truth
'Cause what goes around comes around
Ninjas I grew up with gettin' shot down
You know what they say
Life is ain't worth a stitch
But I neva could imagine it
To be like this
Chorus
Fo' my ninjas locked down doin' time
I got you
Fo' my ninjas on the grind helping moms
I got you
Fo' my ninjas dead and ain't comin' home
I got you
Fo' my real ninjas sing this song
'Cause I got you

-Bubbs

From The Beat: As you can see, we had to take out a few of your lines and change up a couple of your rhymes because they weren't appropriate for The Beat. Clearly, you have real skills, but what good are skills if they put you under the control of strangers telling you what to wear, what to eat, where and when to sleep, when to talk and when to be silent? That's the part you left out of your description. You may give the middle finger to the law, but the law has a hold of those balls you value so much, and it's you that's feeling the pain, not them! At least if you're going to write a flow as full as this, include everything, which means the consequences of being thrown into a cage to share with other males only. Damn, homie, that would be enough to put us off it forever!

Countin' Down

Countin' down the days with no release date. Long boring nights choppin' it up with my roommate. Reminiscin' on the days I had…

No point on lookin' to the past. I'm livin' in the present, workin' towards the future, hoping I can make a change and better myself. What is it gonna take? What do I do? I can't follow the same path that led me here. Gotta stop and switch it up.

I sit here every day thinkin' about what I did to deserve this, but then I stoop and remember my choices put me here. And, as they say, "commit the crime then do the time." So that's what it is, and that's what I'm doing… countin' the days 'til I'm free.

-Mejia

From The Beat: You've already taken the first step towards change, Mejia, which is to recognize and acknowledge your own responsibility for what you did to get here. Without that, no change is possible. But, as you have already learned, that is not enough. The next step requires some inner strength to make the decision and commitment to put that knowledge to use by actually stopping the behavior whose consequences you're now experiencing (and hating). This step requires more courage, because it often puts you in the difficult position of having to say no to friends who aren't as committed to change as you must be. We hope you have that courage and we hope you make that change.

Goin' Crazy

My heart is full of art, but my mind is gone
Lost me and my family's bond
Sittin' and goin' crazy like King Kong
What's next to expect
All I keep getting' is reject
My mind is lost
So now I have to sit and pay the cost
It's all down hill
Used to be crackin' thizzin' off a pill
There's nothin' else to say
I just took my life the wrong way
I can't go back
Sittin' here telling you all the facts

-Palou

From The Beat: True enough, you can't go back/But you can move forward on a brand new track/"Down hill" is a state of mind/So you need a different game to find/Your mind's not lost, just misplaced/But be careful 'cause a mind's a terrible thing to waste/Those thizz pills can do real harm/But it's not too late if you hear the alarm/Family bonds aren't really lost for good/If life's lessons are honestly understood/Don't let others put your life on the shelf/You have it in your hands to save yourself!

Burn It

Just here in a cut
Rollin' a blunt
Ready to get high
With watery eyes
But just to ease the pain
'Cause this purp is so good
I just got to hit it a couple of times a day
So if you feel me, just hit it one more time
For the homies who have died
And they'd enjoy to get high
So I just got say
Break it down, open the blunt
Roll it up
And light it this last time
'Cause I got to burn it
To get dumb-ass blasted
To stay high

-Lil' Easy

From The Beat: The "it" that's getting burned is you, your brain, your lungs, your development. It's no longer just to "ease the pain" when all you can think about is getting high. Then it's called addiction, and your mind invents reasons for you to smoke. If you follow your own prescription "to stay high," then maybe you've described your future best with the words: "dumb-ass."

Who I Was

Did you ever live life like a G
Steady hustlin', putting suckas to their knees?
Stay mobbin' knowing there is rules to these streets
It's not so easy like learning your ABCs
Number one rule: stay on your toes and get your cheese
Asking how I know… because that once was me

-Brown Bear

From The Beat: Of course, the very best part of this description is the last line. It reminds us all that what we were we no longer have to be.

Staff

They always sayin' how they gone give me zeros with an hour. Ha ha. They just don't get it. To Creeps, it just don't matter. Doing time is doing time, whether I'm in my room reading or out my room creepin'. No matter what I'm doing, I'm doing time, even when I'm sleepin', dreamin' of my loved ones.

Dreams, they so real I can almost hug 'em. But this ain't gone happen 'cause I stay zero steppin'. With all the zeros I be catchin', staff hella mad 'cause Creeps keeps laughin', sayin', "None like doing time when you doin' time," and that's real.

I never have regrets for my actions. Take the good with the bad, the happy with the sad. The day they let Creeps out, it gone be bad.

-Creeper

From The Beat: Even though you believe "they just don't get it," it's pretty clear to us that it's you who doesn't get it! Of course we're all doing time, in the sense that time moves forward without a pause, wherever we are and whatever we're doing. But if you think "doing time" in the hall is the same as "doing time" in the Y or the pen, then you need to open your eyes and your ears. If they day you get out is going to be "bad," you'll be able to write us from one of those places and tell us that it's all the same to you. Do you really care as much for the girl you wrote about or the family you dream about as you care about yourself? Those "regrets" you never have... they're coming!

Bra

Oh, he's gone, he can't be found
Layin' on my bed like a dead body in the ground
Moms is mad, pops is glad
How did I get here
Because maybe the way I was raised to have no fear
I was free, but now I'm back
My love for my brother is what I lack
Seeing his face in my dream
While I'm sittin' in here is my biggest scheme
I can't think, I can't react
My love for lil' Bra is a fact
Lost and don't know what to do
Sittin' in here looking like a damn fool

-Palou

From The Beat: We're confused by this piece, Palou. You write both that you lack love for your brother and that your love for your brother is a fact. Or, are you referring to yourself? Why is your dad glad? What is the scheme in your mind? And if being here makes you "a damn fool," how will you avoid coming here in the future?

20 Weeks Left

My plan when I get out is to get enrolled in CSM (San Mateo Community College) as soon as possible. I'm interested in the automotive class. I would like to own my own shop when I get older. Then I would like to go job searching so I don't walk around being broke. I hate not having money 'cause then that leads me to stealing and doing things I'm not supposed to.

Then I would like to spend lots of time with my family and friends. Then just take it day by day, like I've been doing here. Oh, and most likely, I'll buy me a '86 Caprice or a '86 Regal.

-Cesar

From The Beat: We really like your plan for enrolling in college and pursuing your dream to take automotive classes with a long-term goal of opening your own shop. That will take some patience and hard work on your part, but it beats giving away big parts of your life to this place, or worse. Keep your eyes on the prize, and don't fall back.

Life After Death

Even though we sin, there is life after death
If you are scared to die, there is still life after death
Even if homies get sent to the pen, there is still life after death
Even if you bang a color, you would still live after death
Homies still set tripping and killing homies that bang the same color,
But when it's your time to pass, don't trip homie, there's life after death
Crazy homies doing life in the pen and CYA, but don't trip homey
There's life after death
Everybody in this world smokes weed to go to a different world 'cause they are tired of livin' in pain
But when we die, there's a new life after death
People think that money is the only thing in life
But when we die all that goes away in the life after death
So think it over again, homey, 'cause there is a new life after death

-Lil' Creeps

From The Beat: Are you talking about a literal life after death, life everlasting? If so, we wonder if that makes you more or less careful about the life you're living now. If you think you will live forever, do you take unnecessary risks with the life you're living now? If you really believe that each of us has his or her "time" to go, then why are so many teens going so soon? Is that part of the plan? And is the "life after death" you imagine the same for all, or does that depend on the kind of life you're living now?

One-Way Bus Ticket

I want to go to Atlanta because it's a lot of stuff to do than the Bay Area. And it's a lot of people I can meet.

-Tb

From The Beat: Come on, TB, you can do better than this. You can't really tell us anything in two sentences! What kind of stuff do you think they have in Atlanta that they don't have here? What kind of people do you want to meet? Do you have family in Atlanta? Where would you stay? Next time, add some details!

What The Adults Say To The Young Ones Left Behind

When I was young, like ten years old, my dad used to get locked up a lot. I lived in East Palo Alto. My mom, my brothers and I would have to catch the train all the way to San Francisco to see him in county. We was young. We didn't know what jail was, but we knew where dad was at.

My mom would tell us that he was in there for behaving bad. He was really in there for selling drugs. Now, as I grow, I'm following his footsteps. I'm in juvenile hall for the same reason. Now I'm having to say the same things to my lil' brothers. I have to lie to them so they won't know why I'm really in here.

-King Koks

From The Beat: What do you tell your little brother when you get home? How do you think he understands the situation? Most important of all, how will he avoid following in your footsteps? The only honest answer is that you have to put your feet down on a different path so that the steps he follows will not take him here, but to school and a better life.

It Ain't Cool

Man, locked up! Man, this shhh ain't even cool out here in this shady-ass county. They out here giving out time like candy on Halloween, dog. But it is what it is. Soooo, it's a cold game. I'm a ninja playing it foul, but I ain't looking for the fair call, dog... But I don't get made, I get even...

-Ju

From The Beat: If you're "playing it foul," then you can expect foul treatment. You get back what you give. As for getting even, the only real revenge you can take on the system is success. That way, you get to walk away and never come back. All the rest is nothing more than empty boasts that dig the hole you're in even deeper.

I Try

I try to understand why life is so hard. I try to do right, but stuff always goes wrong. When you try to do good, there is always something that goes wrong. The staff and POs try to help us by giving us time... but all they thing about us is money and crimes. They don't care if we cry or die. All they care about is money and time.

I wish they knew that all they doing is messing with our life. But we all know we did the crime. But soon it will be over and I will leave and hopefully soon so I can see my baby girl succeed.

-Almac

From The Beat: When you "try to do good," what kinds of things go wrong? What part do you play in those things? What brings you back here, and what would be the best help you could get to keep you out of here? Even if what you say about the staff and POs is true, that they don't care about you, that means that you have to care even more about yourself. You have to think about what you want, and where you want to be in five years. And then you have to make a plan to get there and follow it, step by step.

On My Way To CYA

My life has been rough
Many ups and downs
Right now I feel powerless
Like a king without a crown
I never liked the hall
But I deal with it anyway
But now I'm really pissed
'Cause I'm going to CYA
I never knew I'd be in this position
'Cause I thought I was going to stay out
But they call me Maniac for a reason
'Cause I would never turn down a bout
But then I saved it all out
'Cause what else could I do
Then a tragedy screwed up my stay
And I was stuck without a clue

-Maniac

From The Beat: We're very sorry you're on your way to the Y. The one piece of advice we can give you is to turn down those bouts that make you Maniac. In the Y, every fight (whether you started it or not), adds six months to your time! A word to the wise...

My Own Little Niche

I need a one-way ticket to my own little niche
A road with no obstacles, not even a little glitch
I'm destined to go home to a life full of ease
Where the trees sway gently from the slightest little breeze
I need that ticket to success
To take me out of my misery and stress

-Calvin

From The Beat: A road with no obstacles just isn't real/But you can do much to smooth that road, you feel/This is a sweet dream that leads us to ask/Can you make your life better? Are you up to the task?/Destiny is part luck, but part what you make it/We hope you do what's required, we hope you don't fake it/Still, the thoughts in this poem are really fine/ (And since you didn't quite finish, we cut the last line).

A Soldier

A soldier never backs down
Always stands his ground
A soldier earns his stitches
Never snitches
A soldier may fall
But always stands tall
Will ride with a home through it all
A soldier mentally is ride or die
Never should hr run and hide
Shot, stabbed, wounded, don't matter
If you ain't a soldier, step off this ladder
Of life we livin'
A soldier stays patrolling and dippin'
A soldier only has one goal in mind
To reach the top and take what he finds
A soldier ain't afraid to do some time
For his homeys
365 chillin', writing rhymes
This soldier's time is almost up
Hope for the best and never give up

-Eight Ball

From The Beat: You've got skills that make us wish you were using them in a different pursuit. We think you've missed something fundamental about the definition of a soldier, and that is this: it is the soldier's job simply to follow, to take orders, to do what others tell him and not to think for himself. You might want to read a great poem called "The Charge of the Light Brigade" by the British poet, Alfred, Lord Tennyson. He wrote it in 1854 about a battle in the Crimean War that the "shot callers" sent the soldiers to fight, dooming them from the start. Here is a very short stanza from that fine poem: "Their's not to make reply/ Their's not to reason why/ Their's but to do and die: Into the valley of Death..." It seems to us that in those few lines, the poet has truly explained the soldier's role. Think about it.

Lost In Love

I wanna get lost in love with you
And do all the things you want me to
Hold me, baby, don't let me go
Making love like never before

Making love in the night and romance
I'm telling you, Hermosa, my life is in a trend
They say that true love is so hard to find
I thank the Man up above for making you mine
Talking on the telephone, sending you kisses
A dozen of roses just to say I ain't missin'
The warmth of your body right next to mine
Eres la major, a toast of fine wine
Out to the movies
Maybe sharing some ice-cream
Estoy dormido, don't wake me from my dream
Todo lo quiero, all I need is your affection
My life was fine, but you brought perfection
Now we sit here just holding hands
Whispers in my ear telling me that I'll be yo' man
Girl, mañana is a paradise for two
I feel the same way 'cause I'm so in love with you

I love the way you make me feel
My love for you is all so real
Hold me, baby, don't let me go
Making love like never before

-Smiley

From The Beat: What a sweet love poem, so full of passion, so full of heart/But if it is to be more than words —a life together — then it's time for a new start/When we consider your description, the pair that you were/We wonder why you would risk all and let the system take you away from her/You have to make a choice — be your own man or just a part of the herd/Do you want the warmth of her body or just the warmth of your words?

Family Is Best

Back on it. Man, I miss my family. I remember the days when me and little bra used to stay wrestlin'. Having a good time. But I'll be out soon. But it seem like when you're down, you miss them the most, and I know they miss me, too.

Family is the best thing, when it comes down to the worst things. My family tries to be there for me for everything. I know when I graduate, there going to be there for that. Whenever I'm locked up, they fee bad for me, and I hate the feeling of that. I don't need them to feel bad. I want them to send me some mail and pictures.

But I know I have to shape up because, once again, 18 ain't no joke. You on your own and you better learn quick, fast and in a hurry, because your moms or whoever ain't goin' always be there for you. But to be real, I can't wait to turn 18. that's when I'm really goin' be in my prime. My birthday one moth away and I feel so good sayin' that, you feel me, dog? But shhh, I'ma holla.

-Mookie

From The Beat: We can only imagine how hard it is to be taken away from the family that loves you and stands by you — and the guilt you feel for making them hurt for you. But you have it in your power to change the picture and, as you know already, unless you do the next stop won't be as nice as this one. Tell us what it is you've learned "quick, fast and in a hurry" because being in your prime is one thing if it's spent with those you love, but an entirely different thing if it's spent surrounded by other men and enclosed behind bars and walls.

My Secret Admirer

This is to my secret admirer
Since day one I've had a thing for you
But I try and play it cool
When I close my eyes after seeing you
I smile 'cause I don't wanna lose that memory of you
You got a lot of stuff going on in your life right now
And I know it will never work out
But since that first day I saw your face
It stuck to me like glue
When I see you, the song Angel Baby comes to my head
I never told you how I felt
And I never will
You're funny and a down-to-earth person
And I like that
You have the most cutest smile
And a nice body
I've felt this way for a while
And the only one that knows is me
When you're sad I feel bad
And then I remember that one day at school
It was just you and I in the lil' room
I ain't gonna say what happened, but I felt bad for you
But like I said, I really like you

-Blue Eyes

From The Beat: We're curious to know why your admirer is secret? Is it that he has someone else in his life, or that you've got someone else in yours? Why can't you just tell him face-to-face?

A Paradise With No People

If I could take a bus anywhere, I would go to a paradise spot that has no people. A spot like Hawaii, but that no people know about. I want to go somewhere that has clear, clean water and white sand. I want to go to a place that has a mansion resort.

-Robert

From The Beat: If you're in a place with no people who will be running the resort? Who will cook and clean? Who will do the fishing for your dinner? Still, when we think about the paradise you describe, it does sound mighty nice!

When My Mom Left

I remember when my mom left to Colorado when I was six, and ain't seen her since. My dad would always say that it was a good thing that he won custody of me, 'cause she's always messed up. Of course, I found out a few years later that he wasn't much better.

Every time I talk to her on the phone, which isn't very often, she's always drunk and high off somethin'. All she talks about is how she's gonna come see me some time, but ain't nothin' happened yet. Maybe one day I'll have to go there and see her.

-Slim Shaney

From The Beat: You were cheated out of the most important thing every child needs to grow up strong and healthy, and that is a loving mother in his life. It's very unfair, but it is the hand you were dealt, and now you have to learn to play that hand in a way that allows you to leave this system and never come back. Getting your education, even when that's boring, is still the best key to open doors that let you move ahead. Maybe you could write us a piece that explains what you mean when you say your dad "wasn't much better." What are your plans for when you touch down?

Do You Want More

I don't know what you did, but you hypnotized me
Was it when you smiled at me
Or your sexy eyes
Was it 'cause you're tall and light
Was it the way you looked straight into my eyes
I don't know, but I'm under a spell and need to be set free
'Cause it's hard to look at you
And you ignore me
But I have no regrets about me and you
'Cause I don't care what haters say 'cause I like you
I'll keep it real while you keep it gangsta
When you come around I get the butterflies
I reel like it's my first time liking someone but it's not
You keep a smile on my face
I try and keep a smile on yours
I don't wanna look at anyone but you
I've tried, but like I said, I'm hypnotized by you
Age ain't nothing but a number
And I like that we both know what we want
But I got to tell you the truth, I want more
I wanna be with you and only you
So let me ask you
Do you wanna be more than what we are
Or are you good with what we are

-Blue Eyes

From The Beat: You're too young to be thinking of your one true love, your one and only, your forever man... It's time for you to spend a little time with yourself and learn who you are before you tie yourself up with some boy who looks good on the outside, but is too young himself to be thinking of the kind of love you want. Maybe you've just hypnotized yourself, and maybe only you can free yourself...

Missin' The Old Days

I'm reminiscing of you right now
Thinking of the good times
You were gonna be my first kid's dad
You were so happy to think you would be a dad
The hardest thing for me was losin' my kid
But you stayed strong for the two of us
I remember after we broke up, you took me for a walk
You tried to tell me that you were sorry
And that you wanted me back
I forgave you then, but told you that we can't get back
I had another vato at the time
And we both went our own ways
But now I'm missin' the old days
His name' in my head, it won't come out
Flaco, Flaco, Flaco
But all I know is that he will never be forgotten from me

-Blue Eyes

From The Beat: We don't know exactly what you mean when you say you lost your kid. Do you mean he died, or that he was taken from you? We know you aren't going to like reading this, BE, but you are not ready to be a mother, and you should not be ready at your age. You have to get your own life together, get yourself into a position to give a child what it needs. Of course that means a roof over his head, food on the table, diapers and milk. But much, much more important, he needs a mother who doesn't do the things that make her happy (thinking of herself before thinking of her child) only to risk losing everything and be taken away for any period of time at all. You will be ready one day, but that day has not yet come.

What Kind Of Relationship Do I Want

Well, it's Thursday night and it's slow jams. I have a couple of people in my head tonight, my best friend and one of my other friends. I need advice, though.

See, I went out with my best friend, but at the end, it didn't work as planned. He would lie and do things that I didn't want to have in a boyfriend. See, I've been friends with him since 4th grade. He's the only person in this world that I can tell my deepest secrets to, and yet, he won't judge me. And he feels the same for me. But it's hard 'cause so much of me wants to be with him again. But yet I'm scared that it will go wrong again and so will our friendship.

I know that I did things wrong in our relationship too, though, like I would talk to other guys and cheat on him. But no matter what, he doesn't trip 'cause he loves me, and I know he would do anything for me 'cause he proves it to me all the time. But I was wondering, should we start over our relationship, or just stay as good friends.

-Blue Eyes

From The Beat: Okay, BE, you asked for our advice, so we'll give it. From long years of experience, we've come to understand that the friendship you and he share is one of the most valuable things two people can have. Love comes and goes, but real friends are much harder to find. We understand why the thought of taking it to another level (again) is tempting, but we think your worry of messing up what you have is a legitimate concern, and you should pay close attention to that feeling. If it was us, we would hold onto that loving friendship as tight as we could.

Movin' With Federal Notes

I shine bright like the beamin' light
From the hot summer sun
Fast like flash, just to get away when I run
Some say I'm rude like Uncle Scrooge
I sometimes win and sometimes lose
I stick to my family like glue
I rather have hand-me-downs
Than waste money on somethin' new
I like to save
Compatible with my money
Fly just like a bee
Like Winnie The Pooh, I need my honey
Takin' trips on a ship, but not no little boat
Movin' coast to coast with a lot of federal notes

-June Bug

From The Beat: Some things to remember about that bear on your tongue/ When Winnie The Poor stuck his nose in honey, he got stung/ You're not moving coast to coast now, a simple fact/ You're only movement is from your cell to a locked school and back/ We understand the dream for federal notes, and we don't want to mock it/ But the notes you're making now are all going into the system's pocket!

My Friend

Do you know who my friend is
Have you seen him before
He's everywhere, just look around
And you'll find him
He's amazing and he knows
How pretty he is
He shows off and makes you wanna try him
Don't say that you will never be curious
'Cause once you see the clouds and swirls
You'll want try
You feel so good
You feel like you can fly
This is my friend, do you know him or not
All you got to do is look around your schools
He's in the bathroom stalls during break
He's easy but yet complicated to make
Just one try and you won't get enough
You'll see things and doze off
He's expensive
You'll spend hundreds of dollars on him
You'll do anything to get him
All you got to do is smoke him out a glass stick
And you'll take a crazy ride for the rest of your life
Is he worth all of this
A pretty rock, so gorgeous
Some people have a hard time to choose
What is more important
The bills or my friend
And most people pick my friend
My friend twists people's minds
And makes them go crazy until they get him
The first time you try him
It's hard to say good-bye
It's hard to stop yourself
Even if you try
He will make you stay up all night
You will not get hungry for a couple of nights
My friend likes all attention on him
So have you seen my friend before
I'm sure you have
Or maybe you've heard of him
He traps your soul
And makes you want more
And when you're coming off of him
You feel like you're gonna die
He makes you angry and you don't know why
You can doze ff for an hour
And yet it feels like ten minutes
He makes you see some weird stuff
Sometimes it's even scary what you see
He destroyed me
He has my soul
I am his
I am addicted to his love
But if you looked at me you wouldn't know
But sometimes you can tell
My friend is crystal meth
And he loves me
And won't let me go
I'm addicted to him
So tell me, are you addicted to my friend, too
Have you seen him
Does he love you as much as he loves me too

-Blue Eyes

From The Beat: As the old saying goes, "With friends like this, who needs enemies?"

The Bandit

When I come to jail, my mom have to tell my six-year-old brother where I am and why. He is a bit old for his age, so he recognize where I am. I think he like being bad. But out in the streets , I ain't lookin' for no trouble. I'm just tryin' to protect myself. But when I get out, I'ma try to do betta.

-Ko

From The Beat: We want you to think about your six-year-old brother very seriously. Little children learn by watching their older brothers and sisters, and by modeling what they do after what they see. So, unless you want him to writing from juvenile hall some day, you have to start giving him a different model to follow — not from your words, but from your actions.

Runnin' Through The Crowd

I'm here
I'm real
Animator man with the three-dimension feel
With the sound, we're gonna throw down
Electrify the party with a permanent blam
I'm not small — teeny tiny — I'm packed to the max
With a pound of dynamite
I'm the man with the fool-proof plan
Killa Cali made me, ya gotta understand
We're loved, we're proud
Ridin' like a freight train runnin' through the crowd
I know that there must be a million other players
But there's' always room at the top

-D-boy

From The Beat: Oh, you're real all right. You're very real — much more real than you know if you think it's "Killa Cali" that made you. Of course, that's partly true, but only partly, and to be honest, we're much more interested in the other part — the part that is uniquely you, that has the brain and imagination to create the word images you do. Room at the top? Who cares? The top is full of liars and cheats, just like the bottom. You're much too smart to make that your ambition. Go for what lies between. And that's life itself. That is something that only you can define, and no one else.

Size

People talk too much shhh
And it's getting on my nerves
They find every reason to run their mouths
Just to try and ear respect
Or to be funny
We are all not perfect
And only the mature people can see that
'Cause it's the immature people who like to tease
People try and make jokes about weight
You're too skinny, too fat, or you need to stop eating
But did it ever occur to you that maybe this is pregnancy fat
Or maybe it's 'cause of all the stress on me
But does it really matter about size
'Cause it should matter about their personality
People judge way too much
And it's getting on my nerves
Yes, I'm big and are you gonna be the one to pay for 24 Hour Fitness
My guess is no
I got pregnant in my first year as a teen, but I got in a fight
I lost my kid and that's why I'm fat
I just recently lost another
But no, you don't know
All you do is judge or be rude
Just 'cause people are big doesn't mean that they need to be treated differently
We are all people, can't you see
I don't judge you so don't judge me
I've been disrespected way too much
And I'm tired of this shhh
You don't know me
So stop talking about me
Like I said, everyone has problems
But just don't take it out on me

-Blue Eyes

From The Beat: There are two important points to make. The first is that you're absolutely right. Your weight and size are only big deals to immature people and should be nobody's business but your own. So, consider the source and take it for what it's worth — nothing! But the second important point to make is that there is a connection between your addiction and your miscarriages. In our mind, you're way too young to be having babies anyway, but pregnancy requires that you treat your body with a lot more respect than you get from the damage that crystal meth does to it. We know you already know this, so we don't want to lecture. But we do want to make the point so that you never forget! (And one last point: You've given us eight pieces to publish, and, even though they're all good ones, that's really too many. It makes it look like The Beat your special publication, and it makes us look like your personal secretary. So, in the future, please limit your contributions to six a the most. Thank you.)

Love The Fam And The 'Hood

Time to talk about life… Leavin' yo' wife, leavin' yo' whole fam bam. This ain't right. I'm just sayin', man, judges is real shady. Will work you, really twirk you.

Well, I'm 'bout to be out, a new birth… Dude, all my hypes fo' dough… Smarter, ya boy gone work harder. I need to stack, but I'm black. It make me a easier target. It's real sick, but I'm not gone blame nobody fo' my life. I'm gone work fo' a better life. 18 and seen mo' than most three times my age, down to murders, fiends, people with AIDS, family dyin', so many cryin', I ain't lyin', things I can't put on paper. But all this taught me and made me greater.

Now I live to get my momma out the 'hood. She deserve to see betta, and I wanna be the one that's gone let her. Life is a trip, so I always stay with my luggage. I guess that's just me, always on some shhh. I ain't gone lose my love fo' the fam or 'hood life no time quick.

-Twin

From The Beat: Here's the paradox you present, Twin: You want to help your mother get out of the 'hood (because she deserves better), but by committing yourself to the 'hood (no change no time soon), you put yourself in the very risky position of being taken from your mom (as you are right now), and spending longer and longer periods of time locked up, unable to help her or yourself. We know you think you can be smarter than the system and avoid it's cold consequences, but we also know the prisons of America hold more people than any country in the world, and that most everyone in them believed the same thing. For the sake of your mother, if not for your own sake, we hope that you see that working a legit. job and stacking those chips slowly but regularly is the only way to do it smarter.

Deceived By First Impressions

He was so beautiful and fine. He was an angel sent from God, so we hooked up together for two years. He was my heart and my soul. I fell for him. He told me he loved me and by looking in his eyes, I thought he really did, so he took my virginity and I fell in love with him. But it didn't seem like he felt the same about me. And when I asked him, did he love me, he would choke and throw me into a wall and tell me he hates me, and come back and say he was sorry, and I would tell him, "It's okay," and then comfort him. Was I deceived by first impressions?

We started to argue and fight about the little things. If I was talking to someone that he didn't like, he would tell me to get off the phone. I would say, "No," and then he would pull my hair. And when I started to scream, he would call me all types of names and tell me that he hates me. Was I deceived by first impressions?

So one day I asked him if he loved me and he said, "Yes, I love you, but I'm not in love with you." My self-esteem was so low, because I was deceived by first impressions.

-Ashanti

From The Beat: Unfortunately, Ashanti, this is an old story. It's really about the boys who remain boys throughout their lives, believing that the measure of their power lies in how they treat (and mistreat) girls and women. Boys who are very insecure about themselves find security in trying to control their women, as if you are not an individual as unique and important as he. We're sorry that you've had to experience the humiliation at his hands, but in the end, you can pity him for never having a real man to teach him what it means to become a man himself… and hope that he learns before he hurts the next female in his life. Respect and honor must begin with you. Love yourself, and respect, honor and love will find you.

We All Did The Crime

It hurt me when I found out the news
I was shocked and confused
We all got ratted out by someone we all knew
She didn't want to end up where I'm at now
So she told the cops the truth
I miss you all very much
And it hurts me as much as it hurts you
But look at what she did
You are all in jail
And I'm in here wondering about you all
All ten of us kickin' it together havin' a good time
Damn! It's like every day I'm thinking about what used to be
What hurts me the most is that she did the came crime
But since she ratted us out, she's not doing time
Where is the justice in this
What was the point
A couple months she would have gotten in here
That's not much

-Blue Eyes

From The Beat: Since you're about to be free, we want to tell you as strongly as we can that you are not here because she ratted you out; you are here because you did something that gave her the power to save herself by telling on you. If you had not done it, she would have had nothing to trade for her freedom. The reason it's important you understand that, truly understand it, is that the entire criminal justice system is built on trading information with the guilty in exchange for benefits — from juvenile hall right up to death row! So, since you can never know who will turn, the only way to keep yourself free is not to do the things that give them currency to bargain with. Understand?

BROTHA ACHIM

LOSING MY MIND

Help! Help!
I think
Quiet!
What if someone hears me
I'm losing my mind
They'll think I'm crazy
I can't have that
I will be put away…treated
Like a crazy person
I am only losing my mind
I am not going crazy
Now I am talking to myself
But no one can hear me
It doesn't heart
So, it mustn't mean
anything
I've got to get help
What if no one can help
me
Surely others have lost
their mind
And simply
Not talked about it
There seem to be such
A world full of angry
Hurtful people
Where to turn
Maybe it's a natural
occurrence
To lose one's mind
And alls I need to do
Is await its return
I have to get a grip
Let me take a deep breath
Whatever must be done
Only I can do it
I must get control of my
fears
No one seems to notice
I can live and survive
without my mind!

Brotha Achim is writing to us from the CDC in Soledad, Ca. Brotha Achim is not new The Beat, he's an O.G. He's been around for a long time. He's back with some O.G. advice for all you youngsters and old timers. Brotha Achim talks about a few things in the next couple pieces of writing ranging from life lessons, to a poem about him losing his mind. So listen to Brotha Achim speak!

A Warrior

In an inescapable perilous situation do not expend your time and energies. Panickly running away from your fears when you have no idea as to where you need run. The odds favors the warrior who stands and fight with conviction, even in the most helpless of dangerous situations, even until the very end. Even if that were not so, it is comparatively far more bearable to suffer defeat standing than defeat running away.

THE EGO

The masters of old taught you to condemn the ego, to humble yourself and to move away from the strength of the ego. While I can not agree, I do not disagree. Their thinking was circumstantial, in an attempt to aid human kind at that time period. The old master's ignorance of psychology, was reflected in their teachings. Like a doctor trying to cure a disease unknown to his or her experience.

We have evolved faster than the thinking and teachings of those masters. First and foremost, there is no such thing or place as an ego. What is commonly referred to as the ego, is an individuals intellectual energies, designed to cope with the challenges of life. The ego of the primitive individual was condemned, because their internal strength (ego) was the source of their destructive behavior (e.g., wars, rapes, robbery, etc.) this internal strength (ego) was determined to be a negative force in need of suppression. What the old masters didn't realize is there are neither negative nor positive energies.

By attempting to suppress energy, the very act in and of itself gives that entity of strength. Conversely, the internal strength (ego) of the evolved human being is necessary to prevail in our competitive, hi-tech, sophisticated world. This inner-drive is needed to enable the committed individual, to crystallize his confidence in their abilities and knowledge, to better able him or her to make their talents available in our ever-changing, ever-challenging world.

The Essence of Life

The essence of life is to love you. It's as easy and as simple as that. To be tolerant, forgiving and compassionate to those who may have lost their way, who may have error in judgment and in their actions. If you would forgive practice forgive those who love you. This is not a contradiction between forgiving your loved ones/friends and not forgiving your "true-enemy". We must in our minds and in our hearts move away from that lethargic, brain dead be(lie)ving and searching for absolutes; They do not exist.

Our American disease of "what's the answer and how much does it cost" is terminal cancer. In each and every situation or dilemma, we must independently evaluate and re-evaluate over and over again to determine a wise. Prudent course of action. Living life is definitely not for the lazy. There is no one book or school of ideology, past or present with all the answers we all so desperately seek in life: it is a joke and we are just fooling ourselves.

There are no cover-alls, rules or laws that you can simply learn and memorize and then simply be done with the business of this thing called life that was just thrust upon us involuntarily. Plainly put there isn't anything anyone can say, write or do that will effectively apply to you in all situations.

Cowardice

If you are above the age of reasoning and you forgive the grievous transgression of your "true-enemy", you are a coward. A coward in the Face of the enemy is a traitor, an abomination with no place in this world of continuous strife and struggles. Forgiveness is never the right thing to do, it is an escape, a way out, a weakness and a character flaw; you know it and so does your enemy.

If you forgive, you will most certainly forget and turn your alertness
away and most assuredly live to regret it by becoming your enemy's prey. To say you forgive, but you do not forget puerile play on words, a hypocrisy, an oxymoron. Hate must be met with hate because hateful things hate, violence must be met and fought with violence.

Universal law commands you neither beget forgiveness –the history of mankind is a glaring example of that truism. Your enemy recognizes your forgiveness as a sign of selfish weakness, lack of commitment to yourself, to your cause, and your failure to stay the course. And as soon as you forgive, your enemy has an inexorable "duty" to mercilessly strike a coupe de grace- to reaffirm universal law. Universal law- "That only the strong survive by feeding upon the weak."

As much as we would like to delude ourselves into thinking that "we" have evolved into compassion , humane civilized human beings, we all know that to be a lie: a cursorial review of any newspaper or viewing of any newspaper or viewing of any news broadcast, lucidly indicates daily atrocities all over the world and that mankind is just as vile, vicious and savage as he was from day one.

MIKHAIL MARHKASHEV

It's hard to believe but some kids got killed over a pair of shoes. Sad, but true.

Mikhail Marhkashev is writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca. Marhkashev is a highly valued consistent writer who proudly puts it down for us readers on a weekly basis. Markhasev always shares his deep writings and puts some food for thought on everybody's plate. So listen up! This week's lesson on "lies" is super good stuff!

Untitled

Our sojourn here is joy or grief
At times it's pain, at times relief.
But one thing's sure:
It's short, and times a thief.

Many years ago, in a little Eastern European village, a milkman came to the Rabbi, seeking advice. "I have a problem", he told the old man. "You see, the milk business has been in my family for generations, and when my father died, I took over. We always used to add a gallon of water to four gallons of milk, to dilute it and make more money. But because I fear the Most High, I decided to do things honestly, and passed out pure milk yesterday morning. By evening-time, the entire village was at my door, and they said that I'm trying to poison them."

They said, "We've been drinking your family's milk for hundred of years, and it has never tasted like this!"

"Rabbi, what should I do?" asked the poor milkman.

The old man thought for a minute and exclaimed, "You see, that's the way it is in this world: people have been drinking lies for so long, that when you give them the truth, they think you're trying to poison them!"

I think the whole of concept of 'truth' is very painful to swallow. For instance, I can 'receive the truth' with my mind in an instant, but it will take me a lifetime to digest it, to put it into practice. Again, I can only write about my own experience, although I suspect that it's common on this plane.

Several aspects of American life struck me as completely new, as I moved into my teens in the early 1900s. The first was the concept of "being cool"(whatever in the world that means). My first experience with this was "having cool shoes", like some brand new "Air Jordans"(this was back in 1900, mind you). It's hard to believe but some kids got killed over a pair of shoes. Sad, but true.

Other concepts that struck me as odd, but which I couldn't understand until I actually took my head out of my butt (already in prison, stuck with LWOP), were "keeping it real", "being yourself", "finding yourself", "fitting in", and the rest of the psychological fruitcake, with which our society is pelted all across the line. Well, I spent my teens "listening to my heart", "believing in myself", and "trying to be cool", all of which amounted to a massive dung-heap, through which I'm wading as we speak. I'll get to the bottom of this, I tell ya!

Needless to say, the Christian Faith has turned me away from my self-absorbed quest, but it takes a conscious effort on my part to daily implement it in my life. If the 'truth' about my past, my blindness, and the hopelessness of my present circumstances were the only real factors of life, then I'd only despair. It's very painful to face yourself and realizing that you've lied to yourself, and have lived a lie.

But, because the Gospel teaching of repentance is never separated from faith, and faith is coupled with hope, and hope is byproduct of love, then it's only challenge to grow as a genuine human being, as a real, renewed by the Holy Spirit in Christ to be a new man in God – the person I was destined to be by our Maker and Lord. It's a painful challenge, an uphill climb with many crosses, scrapes and bruises, but in the light of eternity it's the only one worth taking, and – at the end – the only one which will matter.

Contrary to the popular ego-centric emphasis of 'finding oneself,' Jesus Christ pointed to a different path, "If anyone desires to desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?

Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Take care, TBW readers. Your real worth isn't in what you have or where you stand on the social ladder, but in who you are as people made in God's image.

JESSIE MACWILLIAMS

Jessie MacWilliams is becoming a loyal writer like his pal Curtis Cook, who is also coming to us live and direct from a correctional facility in Selma, Alabama. Like we said, Jessie is a new writer, and this week he sends us a very disturbing poem or the ugliness of hate and revenge, through the barrel of a gun, and for that shooter a life in prison, if not death.

Kiss of Death

It's going down, don't need no when or why's
I will dress up life and let her kiss you goodbye
What started out in evil words
Will end up in bloody shirts
You don't know it's coming, is my main thriller
I stare thoughtless as I load the brain spiller
Watch how my magic flows
Making dirty flesh fold like clean clothes
I made a deal with death while she dress up
When she comes to kiss me, give me a heads up
I remember when death almost laid her lips on me
Luckily I kissed her before she kissed me
The time has come to fill the adrenaline rush
While you tongue kiss my barrel before it bust
Kiss your life good bye.

Watch how my magic flows
Making dirty flesh fold like clean clothes

MICHAEL MCKINNEY

Our next writer is coming from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Fla. Michael is no stranger to The Beat as you all well know, he's a consistent writer and his work is published nearly every week. He's a super dependable writer with a lot of knowledge and insight on life. Here's a few pieces from Michael with various topics ranging from struggling, gaining wisdom, to just general facts of life. He's always willing to share his thoughts. So go ahead Michael and kick some knowledge for the readers!

Don't Mislead The Young

Everyday in this big wicked world, the young are mislead. The young are being brought up in a very bad and misleading way. There are not many who seem to care as to how the young are being brought up. The bible tells us train up a child in the way he should go. When he is old he will not depart from it.

Nowadays' it's all about money. Not the concern as to how the young are being brought up and the outside world are crying about how ruthless the young are becoming out there in the streets. But most people give up on young to easy. Letting them run wild in the streets until someone kills them, or the law catch up with them and throw them in jail. Locking the young up, sending them to jail and prison is not the answer because most of them are not learning anything in jail.

The young get use to running the streets for so long, they become very cocky, arrogant, lazy, and disrespectful. Because in the streets they are not being taught any respect. They are not being taught how to live a balanced and fulfilling and responsible life. Something that's going to help them keep they head above the water. Because once the young get hooked up into the life of the streets, they get caught up into all kinds of gunplay, drive by gun play. Jumping out killing on sight gunplay. Shooting up the playground gunplay.

The young shooting the young for no reason at all. The young get caught up into the carjacking hard working people for the cars. Robbing any and everything without a cause. Because in the fast life of the streets the young are being mislead to live the way they are living. A lot of them have good intention, but they let it go to waste. But the young are not the ones to blame, but when the law catch up with the young, they come down real hard on the young for the crimes they are committing in the streets. But no one is getting locked up for the crimes they are committing on the young for misleading then into living a life of self-destruction.

The young are only following in the footsteps of the ones who are misleading them to do so. They're ones who the young are looking up to in the streets. The older dope pushers, are turning out the young by misleading the young into selling drugs for them, for a little of nothing. Now the young have they life on the line, while they are making the big time dope dealers rich. While the young is only making just enough money to make it from one day to another day. They keep the young to get them rich. They keep the young thinking that it is all good.

At the same time they only be helping the young throw they life away in the streets selling drugs, knowing one day they are going to get caught, then end up in jail. Unless, you are willing to change and reform yourself. When the young end up going to prison, we are faced with the same thing.

Be All You Can Be

In prison is somewhat like being in the army. You got to learn how to be all you can be because prison life is not the end of the world. When I say be all you can be, I am not talking about in the wrong way. I'm speaking of being all you can be in all the right ways. There are so much to be learned right here in prison. So being locked up like this is the time to be like the army be all you can be. Now is the time to train our mind, body, and soul, so we can gain control, and keep control of our own life.

The old saying, "Be all you can be" comes from the army. But in the army, is not the only place you can be all you can be. In prison you can be all you can be in a self-made way. By doing your own self-studying. Myself and many others, who have struggled greatly right here in prison to change the way of thinking and living, went on to be all they can be right here in prison.

Open My Eyes

I had to open my eyes, so I could see way much better down the road that was ahead of me because for so many years I had lived as if I was blind or death struck. I did not know which way in life I was headed. I did not have any direction. I lived wild, very wild. Never thinking before acting I did not see anything and I did not want to die.

But it had been times when I felt as if I did not care if I got killed. There has also been other times where I felt as if I did not want to live anymore, and a lot of times I would act the way I was feeling. I had no control over my temper at all. I would get mad so fast over some of the smallest things and be ready for all out war.

Every time I looked around I was fighting someone about words. I had a big ego, and was always trying to prove a point through violence. I have shot people for no reason. I have hit people upside the head and face, with guns, baseball bats, and pipes. Every time I did bad things like that, I felt real bad deep down inside. So I knew it was something wrong with the way I was living because these are the things that kept me locked up in prison and while in prison, I went on to make my stay in here in prison harder then it had to be because I did not have much control over my emotions.

I was always headed down the road of self-destruction. But in prison, as I was getting up in age, I went to opening up my eyes, to the fact that I had to change my way of acting and thinking because I was getting wiser, and the more I was opening my eyes the more I was able to see, that my life was headed down a dead end. Now that I was able to see my mistakes and everything I had done been through clearly, I was struggling to change my life for the better.

Quiet Strength

God there have been many times when I fallen weak as if I had no strength to carry on But God you was with me, to see that I stayed strong
Cause there is no way I could have it this far in life on my own
Cause you have provide me with your quiet strength that could not be heard or seen
And it was clear to my eyes even when my heart was mean
Your quiet strength made the way for me to keep struggling
So your quiet strength is being unseen as you work your blessing in my life
And your quiet strength is my home
So there are no way I will ever feel alone, your quiet strength always keep me warm
And god without your strength in my life would have been gone
But I was saved when you engraved your quiet strength in my bones.

Misery Loves Company

And I use to all the time hear this old saying that "misery loves company." And right here in prison is where I first start hearing this saying that "misery loves company." But at that time I was young. And my understanding was not all that bright of a lot of things. So I did not really understand the over all meaning of this saying, "misery loves company."

But as time went on, I had learned more about what they meant when they was saying "misery loves company." And I also learned how to identify with my own misery.

When I was in that state of feeling miserable and that was that kind of state of mind I did not like to be in 'cause when I am angry or miserable it was very hard for me to think or be in control of my action. And this would sometime have me going off on people for really no reason at all, making them a part of my misery.

And now I am able to see that was not cool but in moments of misery I did not know any better. But when I be angry or in that state of being miserable that's when I like to stay off to myself and not say much, because I did not want to make other people feel the pains of my misery just because I was miserable, cause I was not the kind of person who got a kick out of seeing other people miserable. Also I was not the kind of person who thought it was funny to make other people feel the pain of misery. Cause I have first hand experience from knowing that the pain of misery is not a nice feeling.

At Florida State Prison I had spent a big number of years in close management lock down. Which is all one-man cell lock down. And the environment is full of misery minded inmates. And the environments breed a lot of hostility and hostile attitudes and miserable attitudes and they would go out the way to make everyone else around them to be in the same state of misery they was in cause they did not know how to do time being locked down in a lil' small one man cell. They was not into nothing that was worth while such as learning, reading, writing, studying, and working out. They was too lazy to do anything for themselves. Some of them didn't know how to read or write and they was not trying to learn and the first thing that comes out they mouth, man ain't nothing to do in this cell and I know better then that cause there always something for me to do in my cell.

Even if I had to just lay back and think most of the day. And these misery inmates who love company was not about doing something productive with they time. All day long they stand on the window, or on they cell door yelling and talking shhh to each other, showing no restraint. And every time they open they mouth they don't be talking about nothing and some of them talk so much about nothing they would make you feel they misery just by hearing them. They did not have no respect for the next man at all and there have been times when I try not to pay these misery ones who loved company no attention, they would go out they way to disrespect me. Beat on the wall while I'm at peace with myself.

When I'm resting they would jump up and down on my bed. Doing what ever they can to push they misery off on me. And I am not going to lie sometime it would work. Sometime I would get so mad I be wishing I could bust through the wall and get my hands on them. And when I let them know how mad I was they would be so happy, laughing at me while I am going off on them. Now I be just as miserable as they was and they really would be getting a kick out of seeing me miserable like this. And when I cool down and realize what they had done the first thing comes to my mind that misery loves company.

Read, Learn, and Gain Knowledge From Good Books

Reading and studying books in prison, has become a very good addiction to me. I found so much importance in reading books. And in a prison cell I under took the studying of all kinds of knowledgeable books. I had made up my own booklist, and every chance I got, I wrote for books off my booklist, and I would have friends on the outside order books for me.

The more I went to reading books, the more I wanted to struggle to change my life, and the crooked environment I live in. I never thought reading books could have such of a big influence on like they did, and being locked down in a one man cell like this gave me more time then ever read and study some of the best books I could ever want to come across.

Once I was through reading and studying my books, I would pass them on the younger prisoner who was hungry for that knowledge. I also passed some of my books on my to the older convicts who was hungry for that knowledge. I never kept my knowledge to myself.

I always passed on because I felt it was my duty to pass the knowledge on because I wanted many others to learn what I had done learned. I know there are a lot of young people who read The Beat Within. So I encourage you all to read some of the books that I am putting in this piece of writing.

Tiny Faith but Mighty

My faith is tiny, but very mighty. All through my years of struggling, fighting to make it from one moment to another moment. I have always held on to just a small piece of faith, and that small piece of faith has carried me a long ways in my life. No matter how hard times had got for me. My tiny piece of faith stayed with me. It was apart of me. God had blessed me with this tiny piece of faith because he knew I had a very long and hard life ahead of me, and he knew this tiny piece of faith was going to come in handy for me.

And in 37 years of living, many storms, had hit into my life very hard. But my tiny faith is what helped me to keep my head above all the storms. I live through all of them because God saw how I held on to that tiny piece of faith he had blessed me with, years ago. God was always with me and with my tiny piece of faith he is still with me right now today. Faith as small as muster seed is all it takes.

Dear Beat Within

Big ups on giving me an outlet to sort out my inner demons and helping me to convert my situation into a positive reliever of anger that simmers inside. And to the readers and personal like. Thanks and love.

Kaution is writing to us from Pelican Bay State Prison, way up north in Crescent City, Ca. Kaution is not a regular writer but he's also not new to The Beat Within. Kaution has a couple of incredible pieces about his life and how he grew up. He talks about gangs, life and trying to turn the negative into positive. He also speaks on what actually goes on in his reality. No BS, Just some straight up talk from a straight up dude. Listen up to Kaution he spits some worthy game!

Prosperous

"The morality of innocence is necessary for growth…"

For starters life is complicated, and when you add in incarceration it becomes a drag. So far my life has been an open book, but not because I express such in written form, it's the fact that no matter what there are no secrets in jail. Its like you can't use the bathroom without someone knowing, let alone breathe. The walls seem to be closing in on me, but constantly I manage to escape insanity.

Almost 8 years of imprisonment and overbearing nervousness but never am I in a state of stress. I know it's a double standard but its true. I'm on edg,e because in here things transpire before you blink. Eagerly I wait to be free, but the question lies that shall I see freedom what should become of me? A robotic effect is what has consumed my frame of mind. When I was in the halls it was something different everyday, but in prison, from the meals to the program all stays the same.

As I lay on my bunk writing this thought, my mind is racing with all types of things I wish to address for some that surround me. This place is their coffin and it's sad to see them accept such. Everything is for sale in prison from sex, to food and drugs, yet how they portray such on television is false advertising. Yeah, prison might house a few savages and/or down and "I don't give a hoot" people but everyone isn't like that. A lot of stuff in here is based around respect, and as long as everyone is respectful, the drama factor becomes null and void.

I've been through a lot from the juvenile spats and romances with the juvenile hall girls, to being involved in riots (racially motivated) and other various activities. Does it make me a bad person? I wouldn't like to think so, but society is going to perceive me how they wish and not as they should.

I remember back when I was innocent, in the eyes of many. It was in the summer of 1994, my birthday was coming up and I was just about to turn 10. I was swamped with the California gang life. My neighborhood was dominated by Bloods, which I grew up incorporating my surrounding terminology. My siblings didn't help to deter me from such, they guided me into the trap. I can't blame them for my choices. I do say a little of positivity wouldn't have hurt.

The gang life has been glorified for as long as I can remember, movies like: Colors, Blood in Blood Out, Menace II Society, Baby Boy, Boyz n' the Hood, Training Day, and American Me, all surround gang activity. Well as an adolescent I was mesmerized by such. So just before my birthday I got jumped into my hood. I was the first in my 5th grade class to be an active gang member, with gang tats to prove my loyalty, and a Saturday night special to show my soldierism. At the time all that mattered was proving myself to be the baddest youngster in my area.

When I look back on it I feel stupid. I've been lucky in my time as a gangster. This is my first time in jail period. I am lucky to have not been shot, and I'm lucky to been afforded a second chance to prosper as an adult. I'm still involved with gangs but such doesn't define me. I'm a great father to my kids and a very good friend to those that I've allowed to get close to me. I'm a hard worker and I'm not afraid to get my hands dirty. I'm full of ambition and every aspiration I have determined to achieve.

So no, I'm not innocent anymore, but I ain't guilty either. I've had my share of ups and downs, and yes, I run the streets, but who hasn't? In life everyone goes through turmoil, it's just how we utilize our individual turmoil to our advantage that counts. People try to justify their wrongs some even try to compare them. How can one say you did this and went to jail, I did this and didn't get caught. So what I did ain't as bad as what you did. That right there is pure ignorance, just because one gets caught and the other doesn't they both did something wrong so there is no comparison.

I chose this life and I accept the backlash of my decision. My goal now, is to turn a negative into a positive. How I plan to do that I'm still trying to figure that out. I'm in a dilemma because although I know that the gang life can bring me down. I'm determined to beat the odds.

You see I'd rather be real with myself and say hey I'm addicted to this, instead of faking the funk with God or whoever I wish to worship. Hopefully I sort out my desires before I am to get out of here but one thing I am sure of is I'm not coming back by all means necessary…"Sometimes in life a person has to do bad things to keep worse things from happening but it's the motive of such that tests one's morals…"

Mental Cleansing

As I pace this fraction of a walking space within this 8 by 10 human pigeon coop many thoughts bombarded my mind like what is happiness, when one is constantly looking out of a cage? What's to be happy about when all I am is a number? They have a special airing on the national geographic channel called "Prison Nation" that basically revolves around Pelican Bay the exact prison I'm serving out my time in.

I have no objections for a multi-million dollar corporation wanting to broadcast its stock but the glorification of incarceration is my concern. A lot of adolescents will see this same production being shown to the world that showcases nothing but animalistic behavior amongst caged men. It has always baffled me that the female prison population never has been viewed as hostile in society's eyes always the men.

Oprah, the local news networks, and newspapers always portray male prisoners, especially California's male inmates, to be the most ruthless in the country. I admit that our politics are a whole lot different than other states but prison is still prison. I hate not being able to come and go as I please or eat and sleep when I want to. The constant living on an edge drives me crazy and to some its welcomed.

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Who likes to sleep fully clothed and with shoes on because at any given moment an officer might want to play referee to an encouraged gladiator match, just as they did in Corcoran a few years back? No matter what your doing you have to secure your own surroundings. I squat a certain way when I use the phone so that at any time I can spring up and get into action. I shower either to the side or facing towards the shower's entrance just incase a person might want to sneak attack. When I wash my hair, I do so in my cell's faucet with my face facing the bunk area so that I keep a keen eye on my cell mate, a cell mate that suppose to be my homie.

Am I paranoid? No, but self-preservation is first and foremost in any hostile setting. I've gotten so good at observation that upon embracing one of my homies I can check for weapons without him knowing, just as well as he can me. America's homeland security doesn't have shhh on a inmate walking the main line of California's most notorious penitentiaries.

At times protecting ones self can become so strenuous that a lot of people turn sensitive need (P.C) or fake mental illnesses to get medical overrides to Disneyland prisons like C.M.F (Vacaville) and C.M.C prisons like these are filled with transsexual males and have no violence or very little if any. Me, I can't see me doing neither, for one its too much to play your way to a medical override and I can't stomach the extremities certain individuals go through just to achieve such, and snitching ain't in my pedigree period, so there's no need to elaborate.

I feel that hey, I did the crime so I must deal with my punishment like a responsible person. Notice that I didn't say man, because in my eyes women make mistakes too, men are just more prone to them. I do not want people reading this to feel as if I'm glorifying this life or pretending to be this hell of a ninja, because I'm not, I am just me, a person that wishes no one subjects themselves to my same torture that I endure daily.

If I can steer one person whether male or female from this destructive path than I could die knowing that if I had the chance to go back I would've made wiser choices, but I do not regret anything because there was a lesson in each of them that I value today.

Like I said, I'm 23 now and I started out as a 16 year old juvenile so hopefully the young people of the present can see that my situation is no previous writings of mine. I expressed that I too was award of social services and that part of my life started when I was a few months shy of turning two. My mother is and has been incarcerated since I was a baby and I sought refuge within the California gang life. Although this is my first time to ever be looked up, I experienced it all from juvenile hall, C.Y.A, county jail, and prison.

I'm on my way out the door in a couple years, but with the way prison is, I take it one day at a time. Wish me luck in escaping my past and developing a bright and meaningful future."... The mistakes I made are viewed as my badges of growth, and through my mistakes I can see hope. Once viewed as a menace, and I can't deny that a lot, I did it, but from the bottom of my destruction a person has a risen...".

I'm on my way out the door in a couple years, but with the way prison is, I take it one day at a time. Wish me luck in escaping my past and developing a bright and meaningful future.

Love?

I wonder why, is it harder to love me now that I'm not there.
How could you love me when I was there making life miserable?
I guess me being there meant more, even though I was always making you cry.
What is love? Love is a little four-letter word that can mean so much.
Love can feel so good at one time, yet hurt so bad the next.
I don't think that there is another "word" in the whole world that can have so many different meanings or form expressions.
Is love unconditional? Is love about companionship?
There are so many ways to make clear and different ways to manifest it.
Who is to know the true and righteous meaning of love, for some holding on to love is like holding on to a handful of water.
Every time one tries to hold on to it,
It somehow always manages to slip between his or her fingers, for me to love is when that special someone holds the key to my heart.
Not for them to come and go as they please!
Whether it is female or male or whatever your heart desires, I guess something's are best left to love...?

SAMUEL CABRERA

Our next writer, Samuel Cabrera, delivers a couple wonderful pieces from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. Samuel writes with his intentions to reach out to the young readers of The Beat Within. He has much respect for the work we do and in return we have a lot of respect for all his contributions, and the wonderful advice he has to offer.

Dad

When I was younger it seemed that you and I were always at strife. I really don't know what caused such drama. I was always doing too much and you were never doing enough. I was always right and you were always wrong. Our arguments led to a lack of communication and affection.

Now I sit in my cell and I see things in a different perspective tempered by time and maturity. Sorry dad, I regret my behavior and the realization of my action hurts me. I missed out on what you and I, for I, love and respect you to the fullest. I truly want to be your son in life, as well as in name. I send to you across the miles that lay between us, my loyalty and respects. I will never forget who I was and where I came from. I'll see you on the other side of the fence.

CLINTON AVALOS:

THE STORY OF THE SCORPION and FROG

There once was a scorpion that wanted to get across a pond. So he asked the frog if the frog can give him a ride on his back. The frog said " Well Scorpion, if I give you a ride on my back we will both die and drown crossing the pool, for surely you will kill me with your stinger". The scorpion assured the frog convincingly that he just wanted to cross the pond, and that he wouldn't kill him with his pricker.

The frog agreed because the scorpion was convincible enough, and the scorpion was allowed to hitch a ride on his back. Halfway across the pond the frog felt a trickle in his side and said, "oh, you stuck me with your sticker, and now we are both going to die, why? The scorpion looked at the frog and said innocently, "I am sorry, I just couldn't help it".

The scorpion couldn't pass up the opportunity to use its stinger to stick the frog, no matter how good the frog could be to him, even if it meant sacrificing his own life. We could be like that same scorpion at times. On the outer appearance we might seem harmless to ourselves and others, but given the right opportunity we could be negative and self-destructive, for no other reasons other than we just did it!

The Bible talks about this a lot. It says that we are carnal-given into sensual pleasures and appetites. That means that we will struggle with the desire to do good or bad. The desire to do well is from God. The desire to do bad is our struggle with sin. That's when we could take advantage of someone that's good to us, as the scorpion did the frog. In the book of Romans in the Bible, it gives a clear description in words, of the struggle with sin. It says, " I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it.

I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong and my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good. But I can't help myself, because it is sin inside me that makes me do these evil things". Sometimes we can't help ourselves and the temptation to do wrong is stronger than our desire to do good. Being good just might mean being too normal, especially, when the struggle to amount up to someone else's expectations is hard. Johnny be good could be getting all the attention by being a class clown, and you do everything that's expected of you, but with no such luck.

The good news is that you don't have to do good to feel normal-it's a matter of choice. The scorpion had a choice to be honest or not, and keep his word to the frog. Do you remember a time when you were dishonest? Were there any negative punishments to your dishonesty?

Do you remember having a choice to be good or bad? Remember the choices we make can make or break us depending on how we react to the situation. When you find yourself in a tug-of- war between doing what is right or wrong remember that you do have a choice. And remember the Scorpion and the Frog.

Do you remember a time when you were dishonest? Were there any negative punishments to your dishonesty?

Clinton Avalos is writing to us from SQSP in San Quentin, Ca. Clinton is a very creative writer. He has a poem, describing the effects drugs have on a person that is addicted. He also has a couple short stories with a couple lessons to be learned from them. So flip through and enjoy!

Drugs

Doing drugs don't make you cool
Cause you think your balling out of control
Flossin' for show trying to be cool but looking a fool
Doesn't make you the man
Cause you're a dope fiends biggest fan
You might be sitting on dubs for the whole world to see
But what goes up must come down automatically
You might think of addiction as a disease of pleasure
But the end is pain and suffering beyond measure
Think of the consequences next time you want to get high
Is it really worth the damage when you destroy your life
You might be in a hospital dying, gasping for air
Or in prison somewhere cause you didn't listen nor care
You've listened to the facts now what are you going to do
The choice isn't mine; it's got to be up to you
Are you going to stand up for what you believe in or continue to be cool
Before you know where you're going, you have to know
Where you've been and doing drugs don't make you cool
Because you think you're in need if a friend.

The Boy And The Sparrow

A story about a boy, and how a bird helped him confront his fear in times of loneliness…

For years a young boy had a fear of meeting other kids in the neighborhood, subjecting him to loneliness and not having anybody to interact of play with.

He always though that the kids might not like him, for reasons that weren't clear to him, the fear of the unknown kept him in isolation.

What fascinated him and kept his attention the most was that he would look out of his window about the same time of season each year and see hundreds of birds clustered in the fig and sycamore trees; each playing and welcoming the day with song. As he would watch, some would land on the windows ledge, but quickly fly away at the slightest move or sound the boy would make.

One day the young boy forgot to close the window behind him, as he went out to tend his chores of the day. As he walked in he stared up in disbelief to see a sparrow that happened to fly in unnoticed. His feathered visitor was not shy at all of his surroundings, but cocked its head up and stared back at the youth, not caring whether the boy would harm or hurt him. The curious boy walked up cautiously toward the bird and extended out his hand graciously, not meaning to do harm.

Eloquently the bird leaped in his palm and the boy stared at him for a moment, and them said, "Many of your kind are outside afraid to come, but you had the courage to come in, not knowing what to expect". Suddenly the boys fear was gone as he noticed a newfound determination, in his new friend the sparrow with courage. And so it is with our fear and frustrations each day. Each baby step that we take into the unknown leads us into larger walks of life.

Fear is really not fear at all. It's false evidence appearing real. And what is it that we might be afraid of? Mistakes? Everybody makes mistakes: they're a part of life. The only difference between people who are successful and the ones who are not, are how they deal with their errors and failures. The ones that have conquered their fears are the people that have turned mistakes into results. Unsuccessful people let their fears of the unknown control them. And taking the least resistant way out, they never benefit the gainful knowledge from conquering their obstacles and fears.

Obstacles are necessary for success to be, because victory comes only after many struggles and countless defeats. How we confront our seemingly impossible obstacles can greatly effect our determination to succeed, and career. Remember, when we're faced with taking a step out of the ordinary self, think about the story of the Young Boy and Sparrow.

CHARLIE SCHWARM

Lil' Homies listen up

I use to go out and hit that cup
Till I was yaded fight blue with red
There goes another in their death bed
This gangster life criminal
These messages subliminal
So open your eyes open your eyes,
I'm lacing game in shadows of white.
You want to roam the streets late night-
bark and bite, fist fight and funk
but it won't take long you'll be down on your luck and stuck
it's a cold world
smoke swirled
clogged up my head
you remind me of you
cold blooded I was half dead
now I'm stuck
locked in chains
there ain't a key that can get me out through the valley
of death I'm on a walk about 29 to life
put down the gun the knife, now,
quit running away from you
you got a friend in me my code triple two
it don't matter if you bang red or blue
it don't matter if you black or white.
I keep it game tight.
Lace game in shadows of white.
Lace game in shadows of white.

Our next writer Charlie Shcawarm, a.k.a. Jumpy, is writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, California. The homey Jumpy has already been there and done that. He was involved in gangs at an early age and look where it got him! He feels all you youngsters out there and he wants all y'all to know to change your lifestyle while you still can. It's never too late. Before you find yourself in an unhappy place. Here's a few poems and some advice from a guy that was just like you when he was your age sitting in that juvenile hall room.

Dear Beat

My name is Jumpy. I am a 28 year old in for murder. I have been down for three years. I am a poet and am getting a book of love/faith and diary of a prisoner poems published.

I was thrilled to see this magazine and would be very pleased if I could order a subscription can you write me back and give me details.

These kids are just like me- and most on the same path I took. The road to Nowhere Ville! I wish them the best of luck, though I know they are the future of CDCR.- I pray that they find their way before its too late. Before they no longer have a date, or can no longer participate because their minds are shot or bodies cold and- RIP.

To The Lil' Homies Reppin' The Beat

I feel your struggle
We all want to win
Your gang world on fire
Desire and lust
everywhere you go
A locked door
who do you trust?
The guns bust
Yea they bang-bang throughout your hood
But if it's you behind the trigger
You'll be behind a locked door for good
It's understood
But you can never conceive
That once these prison walls shut you can never leave
Mom and pops, brother and sis one love, but I just can't help it
The death amphetamines grabbed hold
in search of another hit
In search of yourself
these cold streets you roam late night
The games gotten trump tight
No more do they fist fight
Grab hold of ambition and on angel's wings ride
Reevaluate who is and who isn't on your side
The ones you love push and shove
Trying to get you out and on the right track
But once your out that thug life pulls you right back
Or maybe it's the crack on the blunt you smoke
Addictions got us twisted up
crystal and coke
look, I hope I'm not wasting my breath
This goes out to those on the brink of death
Young lives on the brink of death.

Foolish

Our next writer has never been stranger to The Beat Within. We've watched him grow as a young adult caught in the prison system for nearly ten and a half years of his life. E-Money has been through the juvenile system and straight into the adult system. E-Money just recently got out and now is doing nothing but positive things, going to school, getting a job. He trying to live that good life and leave all the negativity behind in the past. He's an excellent writer that always brings good point of views and y'all can learn a lot from him. He's now writing to us from directly in our office as he is no longer incarcerated and has no plans on going back!

Do you think you truly know thy neighbor? We live in a cutthroat homicidal society where its every soul for its self and rules and regulations are being bent, rearrange, and seriously violated. It's a mean of survival. A survival that's leaving young ignorant souls lost to an eternal darkness called mysterious death, never having a chance to experience adulthood for he/she was a product of a place we call the ghetto. Where its only natural to see young lost souls die at an early age.

Can it be we have marched through all of the holy chapters of the bible starting at Genesis. And now we stand right here in front of Revelations waiting upon death and judgment. Or this man plotted a seed with nefarious intentions to obliterate a nation by killing millions and millions without touching a soul but influencing a whole world with the most omnipotent weapon of them all-the brain.

Could it be he's the very man responsible for the book we know as the Holy bible and has breaded a lost nation to thinking how we want them to think, walking how he want them to walk, talking how he want them to talk, seeing what he want them to see and dying how he want them to die. It's only you that make it possible for a demon possess soul that has been dead for many years to murder you and your young baby girl who has changed your whole world and gave you something to live for from the moment she said "daddy".

What you fail to realize is that death is not out there death is right there in your minds. The way you think-the way you talk, the way you walk, the way you breath. Affects the community around you. By your foolish and corrupted actions you teach your brother, sister and also your friends about death, but want to grieve and mourn when death decides to come and greet its worshippers which is your brother, your baby girl sister and your ace comrade, or better yet your best friend.

I always been infatuated with practicing how to live life. I don't think I ever completely understand what goes on in the head of the man who practices death. Through wrongly influencing the next man you have been punished 10 times greater by suffering an eternal pain which has left a permanent scar on your heart and will eventually lead to your destruction. You have murdered your brother, you have murdered your sister, you have murdered your friend and most of all you did something you promised yourself you would never do. You have murdered yourself.

Excuse me, I forget, how is a boy going to teach another boy how to be a man if he's not a man himself? Some old man may be reading this piece and saying, " I'm fifty years old I've been a grown man." My response would be, if you're a man why are you still infatuated with seeing what little boys see? Like looking at little girls young enough to be your daughter. Are you not perverted?

That's where our problem lies today in the ghetto. We have been introduce to an on going cycle of ignorant personalities and characters, portraying images that is not that of their owns but of some one else's. Like the legendary Adam and Eve we have bitten down on a contaminated fruit bringing upon our nation corruption and breaded a confuse people who floats in an empty state of unawareness lack of vision, intelligence, understanding, consideration and most of all lost of the ability to love. We are not only killing ourselves off physically from our lack of knowledge, but also in an area that's impossible to exist. Without, that's mentally. Congratulations ladies and gentlemen, you have breaded a dead nation.

I go daily asking the Lord to instill his words of wisdom within my vocabulary to give me the ability to save a nation that is dying rapidly and is losing more than it is producing. It make me wonder what can I possibly do, what can I possibly say to decrease having to see young innocent men and women lying on mother's natures grounds with their brains blown from their heads and silent tears still dripping down their injured souls.

What can I say to possibly prevent that young boy from picking up that soul taker (gun) on that young girl from putting on that skirt and that skin tight t-shirt that says flirt with intentions to go sell her godly gift to perverted men and confused women? What is it I can possibly do to save that unborn child who already knows from birth that he/she has entered a corrupted world where the pain hurt so much that even grown men cry never understanding why his one and only mother had to die.

To live in the projects is to live in a community where every child dream is the same- we all want to become rich. We are looking for an avenue to run down to cease this pain and turn into an eternal peace never having to worry about going anymore days or nights hungry or ashamed of being poor.

The only problem with the ghetto child's dream is he/she doesn't know exactly how to become financially stable without violating some rule or law. It is difficult for a lot of us to see past the daily violent street activity leaving us trying to achieve our dreams through the robbing and murdering of our neighbor who's on the same predicament and fighting the same struggle as you. We are trying so hard to climb the ladder and make it to the top that we jump out of our bodies violating all the codes and rules of this game becoming homicidal targets and suicidal occupants not only a danger to ourselves but also the community around us.

It's a shame and heart breaking for another man to tell us that you are your baby girl's biggest threat and you just can't seem to figure out how can that possibly be. Maybe these words will provide you with an idea. Barbarian, ignorance, stupidity, laziness and lack of desire to even want to learn make you more dangerous than a ticking bomb with an intelligent brain attached to it.

The ticking bomb is only going to kill so many-on the other hand your are going to pass your ignorance through generations and generations of people breading and killing off a whole nation of people. That in which you can't see is that in which taking lives. " Do you think you truly know thy neighbor? I don't think you do."

It has always been a sad sight to watch and experience the lives of two young men growing up in the ghetto the best of friends. From infants they have crawled and walked together, cried and laughed with one another and has helped each other through painful and hungry nights at times. And each other it seems is all they got, in a world that never was designed for them to make it. Never did they once think as two innocent children building sand castles together and taking turns eating dinner at each other's house that one of these stormy cold days one of them would be responsible

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for the other ones death due to life's materialistic items.

The future was too hard for them to see and the present is what they were living- building joyful memories that will come to haunt them for life.

Never did I understand the things that went through a grown man's head to make him sit in a place and watch for hours 5 little boys play, with tears slowly dropping from his eyes. He's remembering when he was once a child and blind to the future thinking he and his 4 friends would be the best of friends for life. He's reminiscing on the activities they use to play and the joy they would express just being in each other's presence.

He's remembering their laughter that would break through the ghetto's hard shell of pain in to the sky asking the sun to provide them with another day of its beauty. He's reminiscing how he would beg his mother to allow his four friends to eat with them. Already aware of his four friends' family financial crisis, he's remembering how the ghetto use to be filled with so much love and unity that every black African queen was your Auntie and every bad but innocent-young child was her nephews or niece.

He wonders what happen to those times for his ghetto has become disunities and corrupted. As he reminisces tears flow down his cheeks faster and he feels the frustration start to build up in his chest and the sadness start to hug his heart. He cannot completely think about his childhood without thinking about one of his best friends that he has witness be murdered in these ghetto streets. He becomes more sadder, frustrated and heart broke when he realizes that the man on the other side of that gun wasn't a stranger at all-but a man that looked like him, that talk like him, that frowned like him.

As a matter of fact, it was him. He still feels his friend's mother's tears penetrating his skin hugging him tightly at his friend's funeral in which he decided to attend. He tries to convince himself that murdering his friend was for survival purposes but he can't help what he feels inside. He can't shake being haunted nightly so he turns to liquor and drugs to ease the pain.

Memories is the disease that's killing him slowly and it's not a cure in the world that can help him. He wonder if he went crazy for he can't remember the last time in which he had a honest laugh. He now realizes that he haven't only killed his best friend but also has murdered his childhood. He has murdered himself and his four friends even though three of them are still living.

Before he gets up to leave he glanced through his watery eyes-one last time at the five kids playing. He knows from the corrupted environment they live in they would more likely turn out the same way. He realizes that life isn't nothing but a round cycle of the same pain until someone, changes it. He wonder why do God allows five kids so godly innocent to grow up and turn so devilishly dangerous?

As he turns, a ball hits his foot and he turns to see on of the little boys running his way to retrieve the ball. As the boy approach he tries to wipe his eyes to conceal his pain but it is too late. The boy gives him a long stare and ask in a childish voice, " Why are you crying-sir?" he finds himself speaking a tongue that doesn't sound like that of his own and answer the child question with a question by saying, "do you think you truly know thy neighbor?"

"It seems I live in a world where I know so many but yet I know no one."

Pursuit Of Happiness

In the pursuit to happiness my efforts has been constantly short changed. Freedom of happiness has been nothing but a vision that I see but can't touch constantly lusting and living in her fairytale. It's as if I'm selling myself for short accompanying cheap thrills and pleasures in a desperate search for that place where honest laughter and true joy reside. You can say I've been looking for love in the lost and found, trying to buy happiness with material things instead of looking for that jewel in my heart. I hope for better days but I know life is what you make it, it already did its part in making me.

Life's necessities got me striving to be the best I can be without the army, but at times I find myself struggling with temptation wanting to be a bad boy in a bad world hoping for good results. If life's a test I have received a terrible 'F'. It has taken me to learn I have been mis-educated in a system that is looking to keep me dumb, blind and deaf. It seems I have been shaped to be a mathematical piece for an ideological puzzle. Taught the obedient traditions of a servant instead of the qualities of a Black King.

Ignorance has held me down but knowledge should pick me up to find my happiness.

In the pursuit of this happiness I have took a few wrong turns and I got a few cuts and bruises but I'm dusting myself off and I'm trying again. I put my right hand on this bible and I swear I'm not going to stop struggling for this happiness until it bring the death of me. My knees have been in the dirt and my face has touched the coldness of this concrete but I'm not dead yet. It looks like hell is going to have to wait for another day to kiss my heavenly ass!

I know these devils seek my demise in a world of genocide ignorant to the fact that it's not my time to die. I'm living to take back what's mine starting with time. I'm no longer the sheep but the shepherd looking to open the eyes of the flock. Time is ticking and the slaughterhouse is at the end of your clock.

If you don't stand for nothing you'll fall for anything. I have been robbed for everything including my name. Time is of the essence the past is more than just a lesson- it's the insight too a mysterious future. There lies as lost man identity, his roots, the happiness of his pursuit!

Living in a material world I have substitute things in place of my happiness. Now I know why in return I was receiving a temporary smile. My life's purpose was never questioned. It's like I had an obligation to ignorance. My environment was my ideal. A place where doing wrong wasn't so wrong and doing right was more wrong than wrong. Who'd ever thought the grounds I walked was tainted in blood and destined for death. And who'd ever thought the people I loved was its occupancy.

It's seems I was born a God's son living as a devil's child. Often called an angel pondering demons thoughts. Raised as a Christian but has felt more pain then joy. Baptized in the holy water but has lived a life playing Russian roulette with hell's fire. It seems I've been fooled mis-educated in this devil's school. Taught that it was cool to make friends with a cancer stick named cool. Brain washed with bleach and left out to hang. But the sunshine dried my eyes and I can honestly say, " I no longer live a lie".

Perceived visions discovered in truth has escaped me from the pain of lies and has opened my 3rd eye to a happy side beyond deceptive temptation and has instilled a knowledge that tells a story of peace, freedom and happiness.

The honorable Louis Farrakhan said it all when he say: " he who gives the diameter of your knowledge prescribes the circumference of your activity". Never settle for less and always remember, " The capacity of a man's brain is infinite."

Belief

Most of our beliefs are proved by nothing, mere substituted reasons to define truth is nothing more than theoretical assumption breast fed to a children conceived from nothingness or better yet ignorance. Change is most inspired when current belief is investigated revealing an absence of solidarity. If truth doesn't align with your foundation maybe the mind you perceive the world with is a lie.

A little truth accompanied by a congregation of manipulation and lies brings about delegation of power and persuasion for he/she whom plots his/her seed among a garden of gullible minds. Perception of reality is nothing more than a designated concept for those who still haven't found their identity of purpose. A democracy bathing in an American concept is a democracy of predicted destiny.

Conservative ideologies is running through the veins of modern society and some of them is in pure hate surfing on the tidal waves of a body's blood flow. For them belief has given their eyes an allergic reaction to the pigmentation of skin possessing their disease pass the limitation of a material cure. They are victims incarcerated, subjected to the influences of racism, prejudices and ignorance serving life for the crime of guilty by association. I bring upon an indictment issuing a warrant for the arrest of history and its accused deceased for the crime of distribution of tainted beliefs.

We're on the battlefield everyday but yet there's not a soldier in sight. The media is our general guiding us to the frontline with these silent weapons for these quiet wars. The enemy is an inherited description no body described you just watched what everyone else was watching. Belief manipulated emotions and now hate is the fiery in your eyes. Murder is the gift awarded to your devilish attitude renting your heart to a cowardly mind.

Slogans such as hero, brave heart and icon are attributes that paint your identity for purposes of sustaining a misguiding belief. But the history books doesn't speak of you. You are nothing more than a lost memory who watched someone else steal your credit. The population of society are mere tools helping to build an imperial state through the influences of belief. If you don't have balance of the mind you have nothing.

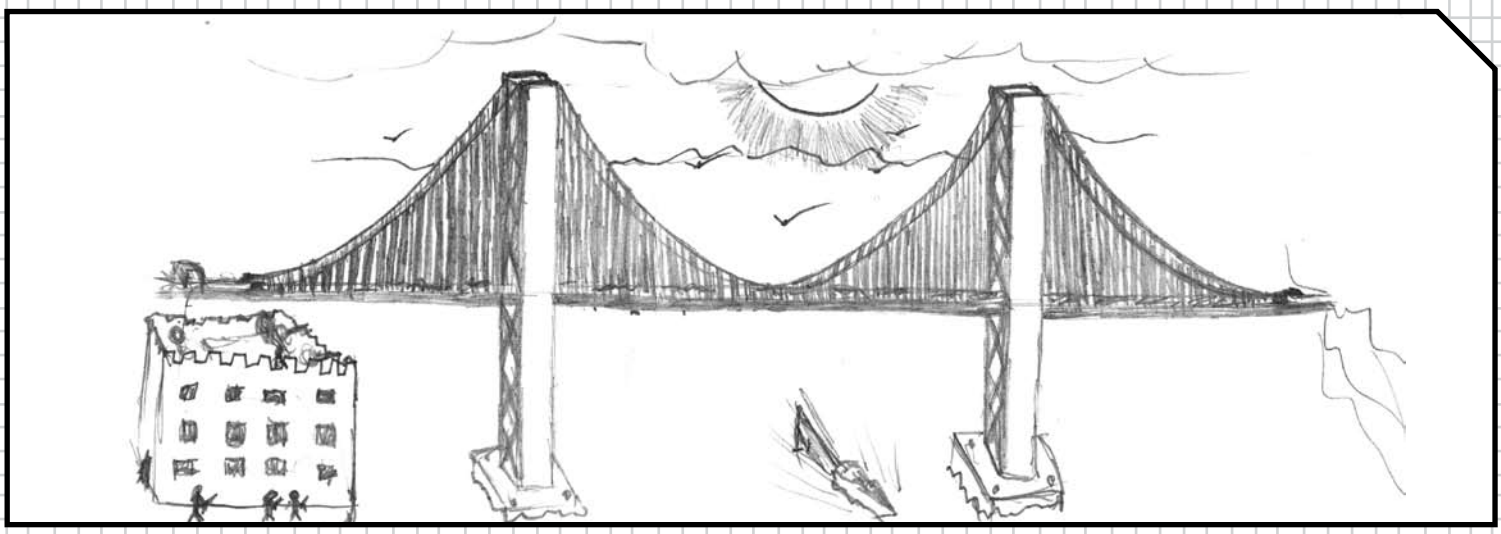
This isn't judgment this is revelation for a dying breed. Crime isn't out there, crime is in our very minds. A key accompanied by a lock isn't justice it's called slavery. Obliteration isn't only on the president's tab it's also charged to the people who voted him in. The blood of murdered children who were casualties of war is also on the hands of you. The secret operations and executive orders that violate the boundaries of the constitution is also a crime of yours. If you're guilty of a distorted belief just remember "ignorance isn't admissible in the court of law."

Freedom is in us all dying to escape the limitations of concept. Our souls are prisoners to belief waiting for a release date in death. Pain is our warning signs letting us know our actions is incorrect but we continue to indulge in the heat waves of hell like Indians in a sweat lodge searching for the essence of purity. Gold in the dirt isn't going to come to a diamond in the rough if clarity isn't of the rubies you perceive the world with. Give yourself a chance by paving your own path if you wish to escape the road blocks to elevation. Freedom depends on you. You are her only hope of survival. Free your mind and escape your destiny from the handcuffs of bondage or these tainted beliefs will be the dirt that bury you.

All these souls falling victim to violence got my heart shedding tears of blood. When I look at the world I see a graveyard of lost minds praying that a rose will accompany their tombstone. It makes me wonder why do we settle for less in a world that offers everything? Why do we put limitations on a mind that's infinite? They say the world turns at a rate of 1,037 1/3 miles per hour. If the speed of thought is at 24 billion miles per second, should 23 hours, 56 minutes and 46 seconds that make up our day be enough time to find truth on the ass of the sunset? Earth is 93 million miles away from the sun. The farthest planet is 4 billion 6 hundred miles away from the sun. There are 9 planets and 1 sun in our solar system. There are billions of solar systems in our universe.

The universe has no limitation why do you? Now I don't know if there's a such thing as a American dream but the American nightmare tells me that there are 3 times more blacks in prison than there are in college. There are two million blacks in prison nationwide as of 2006 making up 40% of America's slave quarters. Gangsterism has killed over 4,000 black people since 1975 and belief tells me that's more than just a coincident.

The uncle Tom can say what he want but fact is false belief is in on this conspiracy. "A man is he who believes nothing but that which is first investigated holding the solidarity of truth." You should watch what you believe!



DARRON GARCIA

I don't know how I was ever able to muster the courage; a ladies' man I was not, not even a little bit...

Darron is writing to us from a correctional facility in Tracy, Ca. This week he sends us a recount of some of his fondest memories and loves. We all have memories that help buoy us up when life seems almost too much to bear. Thanks for sharing yours, Darron!

My Love

I remember when I used to walk home from school with the prettiest girl in the 6th grade. How my palms would sweat or how my heart would flutter at just the sight of her! We would walk, laugh together and just enjoy those special moments. She lived just up the street from me and we would wave goodbye each day as we parted ways. This was our daily routine that school year. I was always afraid to tell her how I truly felt about her, that she was the sunshine of my life. It was raining on this particular day and I can still envision it as if it were yesterday.

We were getting soaked on the way home and stopped in the alley way that was canopied by two huge willow trees on either side. And when "it" happened, it felt like time and the entire world around us had stopped. As we looked into each other's eyes I was so full of fear and anxiety that I thought I might pass out! Yet, not even that would or could deter that magical moment. It was as if the winds of destiny, fate had blown her into my arms. This beautiful creature, my Christina. I don't know how I was ever able to muster the courage; a ladies' man I was not, not even a little bit, yet it all just felt right. We held each other's hands and embraced in what to this day was the sweetest kiss of my life! The exhilaration, the rush of pure excstasy flowing through my entire body the moment our lips touched. To me, this was love.

I remember as a little boy driving up Highway 17 for what felt like an eternity. My brothers and I were in the back seat playing as boys do. As we passed over the summit my dad turned back to us and said, "It won't be long now." With our curiosity fully captured my brothers and I had our eyes peeled in all directions, not knowing what to look for. My dad had told us it was a big surprise. How big I could never have imagined until I finally saw it. As we approached the final ridgeline of the mountains the air took on a peculiar smell, not unpleasant, just different. And then it all came into view.

Suddenly it all made sense. For as many miles as I could see in all directions was the majestic beauty that is the Pacific Ocean. Never before had I seen such or could fathom such a sight...it was awesome! It was a hot summer's day that day at Santa Cruz. We played in the ocean, rode the waves crashing to shore, walked barefoot along the sand collecting sea shells and, of course, rode the rides, those wonderful, wonderful rides. It was a day I'll never forget. To me, that was love.

I remember when I was a young teen, playing on the Milpitas North Little League All-Star Team. It was a tremendous honor just being selected. I had no idea how that year would impact my life. It was the district championship game, us against the heavily favored Titans that were the Campbell Little League All-Stars. Not much was expected of us, for they were the three time defending champions, no little feat. Our team was not flashy by any means. We were just a bunch of kids empowered with the one intangible for which there is no statistic--heart.

Of course we were intimidated. Everyone knew who They were. It was supposed to be a walk in the park for them. Yet here we were, taking center stage at Spartan Stadium, the Mecca of little league baseball. Only the best of the best would grace the field that day. They were led by an absolute pitching ace by the name of Joel Tyrus. At thirteen he must have stood at least 6 feet 3 inches tall, strong and powerfully built, a freak of genetics, a true warrior.

It was a hot, grueling summer day back then. He was blowing through our line-up inning after inning, virtually unhittable! We were doing our own best trying to limit the damage already inflicted by their potent offense. We were down big...3-0 in the bottom of the ninth. We managed to load the bases but were down to our very last out, our very last chance. It was my "ups," my turn to battle the beast. I was 0 for 3 on the day with 2 strike outs. The one time I did make contact was a weak grounder to third. The entire dug-out, my teammates, were on their feet as were the fans, our friends and families. I stepped up to the plate, my best friend, "Pauly" Paul Dominguez, was on third and I could see his eyes pleading with every fiber of his being saying, "Hit me home!"

It was the moment I had dreamed about my entire life; bottom of the ninth, bases loaded, the game, the district championship on the line! I was a confident kid; I knew I was good; I had a great season that year. But my confidence was literally overshadowed by the menacing tower on the mound. I fell behind in the count quickly, 0-2, two blurs of a fastball that blew right past me. The next pitch...a wicked curve that absolutely buckled my knees! I could not believe the ump called, "Ball one!" I thought it was over. His next pitch was a slow change-up, high and away. "Ball two!" the ump yelled. I backed out of the batter's box as if to adjust my helmet. I was simply buying time, not wanting this moment in my life to end. Joel backed off the mound momentarily as well. His eyes bore into mine as if to say, "This is it...you're going down!"

Two warriors facing off against one another in a fierce battle. Suddenly the butterflies left, I felt a surge of adrenaline pumping through my veins. I returned his gaze with one of my own as if to say, "Bring it! Give me your best!" I knew he wanted to end it right here, right now, and that could only mean one thing...his blazing fast ball, his "money" pitch. I was right. From the moment it left his hand it was like the ball was all I could see, the rotation, the seams, it was like slow motion. With all the strength I could muster, I swung at his offering with all my might! A resounding "crack" was all I remembered hearing. I stood there in shock as I looked at the expression of utter disbelief on Joel's face. The ball was skyrocketing toward left field...back...back... going...going...gone! A walk-off grand slam! My teammates, my friends, all erupted in pandemonium! I was mobbed at the plate! Shouts of joy and tears of happiness were all around me. It was the most surreal feeling of my young life; a moment that I captured in my heart for eternity. To me, this was love.

You see, love is a many splendor thing. It comes in many facets like the most beautiful, radiant diamond. Love is pure; love is passionate and raw. William Shakespeare had it right all those years ago when he said, "Tis better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all." Love makes life worth living. Love is the very essence of life itself for to live a life without love is not living at all. It (love) is the difference between living and merely existing. Treasure the loves' of your life as I've done. Embrace them. Welcome them into your heart and soul. You'll be a better person for doing so.

I do not want people reading this to feel as if I'm glorifying this life or pretending to be this hell of a ninja, because I'm not, I am just me, a person that wishes no one subjects themselves to my same torture that I endure daily.

read the rest of Kaution's BWO piece on page 60